UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# FREEZE TO THE TAMBOURINE:
# STORIES FROM FIVE BEGINNING TEACHERS

BY

LINDA MAY EWENSON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **FREEZE TO THE TAMBOURINE: STORIES FROM FIVE BEGINNING TEACHERS** submitted by **Linda May Ewenson** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Education**.

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**Date:** July 28, 1994

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore, with five beginning teachers, the differences between their expectations of their first year of teaching and the realities they experienced. An initial pilot study provided for the rewording, revision, and modification of interview questions. It also provided the researcher with the opportunity to rehearse her interview skills. The formal study involved five volunteer beginning teachers who were followed through their first year of teaching, the 1992-93 school year.

A qualitative research method which included the use of semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection was employed in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the professional world of each beginning teacher. Data collection took place over the period of one year and participants in the study were interviewed formally on four different occasions.

Five themes emerged from the interview data. The first theme was the use and abuse of power by principals and parents. The second theme focussed on university preparation and included the discrepancy between theory and practice and the cooperating teacher as mentor. Support, the third theme, highlighted the extensive support that is available to beginning teachers in an urban school district. The fourth theme, part time versus full time, raised the issue that perhaps the job of teaching has become so large that it is now impossible to do well in a "normal" working day. The final theme, no job, identified a recent trend in education, the inability or unwillingness of school districts to retain good teachers.

The discussion of these five themes involved the identification of the theme, the researcher's impression of the theme, and specific implications and recommendations for practice. The conclusion stated that the process of teacher

education should be a career-long activity, where an individual might move from being a student teacher, to being a practicing teacher, to being a cooperating teacher, and finally to being a mentor to a first year teacher.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND DESIGN

## Introduction to the Research

Teachers of the nineties face many and varied challenges as they strive to educate their students. A vocal and demanding public wants assurance that today's graduates can "compete globally" as our country moves into the next century. Increasingly, better-educated parents demand involvement and input into educational decisions which affect their children. Taxpayers without children in school demand that schools be accountable and produce measurable results as justification that their school tax dollars have been well spent. Within the classroom the recent focus on mainstreaming and integrating students with special needs, combined with shrinking budgets, has in turn increased the pressure on teachers. The more complex social problems of the nineties are reflected in the more complex student problems encountered by classroom teachers daily.

Increased media coverage of these and other educational issues regularly confronting teachers has placed increased pressure on all members of the teaching profession. While veteran teachers have a wealth of information and practical experience on which to draw for problem solving, beginning teachers do not yet possess this knowledge base. The beginning teacher must rely on a combination of instinct and preservice training that perhaps has little relevance to the actual teaching situation. Expectations often collide harshly with the multiple realities of the first year of teaching.

A preliminary review of the literature suggests that there is a marked difference between what is expected by a first year teacher and what is actually

encountered in that crucial first year. (Veenman, 1984; Olson, 1991). Despite the existence of orientation programs in some North American school jurisdictions, (Jones & Barnes, 1984; Schlechty, 1985; Jensen, 1986), it still appears that many new teachers are being left to form support groups on their own or rely on busy and harried veteran teachers for orientation to their chosen profession.

There does appear to be a need for an approach to preservice training which would include attention to the development of skills and strategies which are of immediate use to first year teachers (Miklos & Greene, 1987; Wideen & Holborn, 1986). Before such pragmatic assistance can be provided, however, it is first necessary to identify both the specific areas of discrepancy between expectations and realities, and the reasons for these differences. Identifying these and providing reasons for their existence should assist educators in providing effective preservice and inservice training which address the current realities of today's schools.

In Alberta, the government's deficit elimination plan has involved severe cuts to education funding, which have resulted in fewer classroom teachers and larger class sizes. Yet, as the job becomes more demanding and our teaching force ages, more teachers will be retiring, and new graduates must be integrated into the profession in order to compensate for these retirements. Thus, even in these times of financial crisis, it is necessary for school districts to not only secure new teachers, but retain them as well.

Discovering the reasons for the discrepancy between the expectations and the realities of the first year of teaching, and offering suggestions for improved preservice and inservice training which meets the needs of new teachers should aid in their retention. It is hoped, therefore, that the results of this study assist in indicating directions for the development and continued revision of teacher

education programs in order to retain fresh talent and new ideas in a profession whose workforce is rapidly aging.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore, with selected beginning teachers, the differences between their expectations of their first year of teaching and the realities they experienced. The study centred on the following questions:

(1) In which areas were there differences between expectations and realities of the first year of teaching?

(2) What types of assistance met the needs of these teachers?

## Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined in order to facilitate a more common understanding:

**Beginning Teachers.** According to Veenman (1984), beginning teachers are "teachers in their first full year of teaching after having received a degree stating that they are partly (as in Germany) or fully qualified to teach (as in the rest of the sampled countries). Teachers in their second and third years of teaching are also considered beginning teachers" (p.143). They will also, in this study, be referred to as new teachers.

**Teacher Induction.** As Tisher (1980) has noted, "In several countries, resources have been made available to improve the mode of new teachers' entry into teaching. The term *teacher induction* generally is used to refer to this entry and to the planned support the new teachers receive as it occurs" (cited in Veenman, 1984, p.165). In this study, teacher orientation will be synonymous with teacher induction.

## Assumptions

The following assumptions underlying the problem researched in this study were:

1. that a difference between expectations and realities of the first year of teaching did exist; and
2. that some form of orientation, either formal or informal, was helpful if the beginning teacher was to make a successful transition from the role of student teacher to professional teacher.

## Delimitations and Limitations

The study was delimited to the perceptions and responses of five beginning teachers in one urban school district in the greater Edmonton area. Consequently, transferability of findings would be limited to similar situations. A limitation of this study was that the data were collected solely through interviews. Another limitation was that data collection depended solely on the willingness of the participants to be both honest and straightforward regarding their experiences before, during, and after their first year of teaching. A final limitation was the ability of the researcher to probe for more detail in participants' responses during the interviews.

## Research Approach

For this study, a naturalistic approach was adopted. It was designed to acquire a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the lived professional experiences of five beginning teachers. It was hoped that from these teachers' stories, a greater awareness of their professional needs would be gained. It was further hoped that the analysis of these narratives would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the socialization of new teachers into the

profession.

The design of this study was descriptive as well as interpretive in nature, with the intent of examining in context the lived experiences of five beginning teachers. Gay (1987) has indicated that descriptive research "is useful for investigating a variety of educational problems. Typical descriptive studies are concerned with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, demographic information, conditions, and procedures. Descriptive data are usually collected through a questionnaire survey, interviews, or observation" (p. 189). By interviewing each participant four times over one school year, it was hoped that a better understanding would be gained of the differences between expectations and realities experienced by these teachers in their first year, and of their perceptions of the effectiveness of existing methods of addressing these differences.

## Pilot Study

A semistructured interview guide was pilot tested with one beginning teacher so that specific questions could be revised or changed. Gay (1987) commented that:

> Formal evaluation of a research plan involved a pilot study, which is sort of a dress rehearsal. In a pilot study the entire study is conducted, each and every procedure is followed, and the resulting data are analyzed--all according to the research plan.

This small pilot study provided for the rewording, revision, and addition of interview questions. It also provided the researcher with the opportunity to rehearse her interview skills, widen her background knowledge of the practicalities of the first year of teaching, and anticipate some possible themes and categories. Further results of the pilot study were that the interview guide

was modified slightly and the focus of the study was refined.

## Research Methods

The primary method of data collection was the use of semi-structured interviews which employed questions allowing respondents the opportunity to provide as much information and, therefore, insight as possible into their professional lives. (See Appendix A). Open-ended questions permitted the researcher to probe for a more detailed understanding of the professional world in which these five beginning teachers functioned. This strategy is supported by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) who state that "the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 135).

## Data Collection Procedures

Through professional contacts, a list of names of some beginning teachers with one particular school jurisdiction was obtained. Telephone contact to establish rapport with each potential participant was made, and a brief description of the nature and purpose of the research was given at that time. During this initial conversation, it was proposed that the beginning teacher meet with the researcher at three different times during the school year: before the year had started, one-third of the way through the year, and at the end of the first year of teaching. Five beginning teachers agreed to participate in the study, although one teacher voluntarily withdrew and was replaced by another beginning teacher in early October.

Of the five final participants, two were in early childhood education, two were in elementary education, and one was in secondary education. During the year of data collection one teacher was twenty-two years of age, three teachers

were between twenty-four and twenty-nine years of age, and one teacher was thirty-one years of age. Three teachers were married, one was single, and one was undergoing a divorce. Two of these beginning teachers were known to the researcher, one having been a university classmate and the other having been a student teacher in the researcher's classroom two years prior to data collection.

Following the initial telephone contact with the beginning teacher, a covering letter outlining in more detail the value and purpose of the study, as well as the time commitment involved, was sent to each participant. (See Appendix B). This letter also indicated that the length of the first interview would be approximately one hour, and that it would be tape-recorded only if the teacher was comfortable with that procedure. If there were no questions from the participant, she or he was asked to sign a consent form, indicating willingness to participate in the study. Finally, before the first interview session, a meeting with each participant was scheduled to provide an opportunity for the researcher to respond to questions and further clarify the nature and purpose of the study. Copies of the research proposal were made available to each participant at that time.

Participants were informed verbally and in writing that they would be able to review their interview transcripts for clarification of comments and addition or deletion of other information, and that follow-up interviews would be scheduled after they had had sufficient time to review the previous interview transcripts. As well, they were assured verbally and in writing that their permission would be sought to use direct quotations, and that neither they nor their schools or school district would be identified in the final document. Finally, they were informed verbally and in writing that they had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time.

The majority of the data collection took place during the 1992-93 school

year. The initial interview took place at the university in late August before the beginning of the school year, except in the case of the teacher who joined the study in early October. The second interview took place at each participant's school in late November or early December during which time a videotape of the classroom was made. The third interview also occurred at each participant's school in late June, near the completion of the first year of teaching. The fourth interview consisted of a tape recorded telephone conversation which was conducted in order to glean additional demographic information. Finally, in addition to the four structured interviews with each participant, frequent telephone conversations were conducted with participants at various times over the two years. Responses were transcribed as soon as possible after each interview and transcripts were sent to participants for addition, deletion, or clarification of comments. Two of the beginning teacher participants in the study had relocated so, although the researcher had intended to check their final narratives with them and would willingly do so, this was not possible since they had not informed the researcher as to their whereabouts. The other three participants with whom the narratives were checked indicated that their stories were accurate reflections of their experiences in the first year of teaching.

Powney and Watts (1987) have commented that "Given that a transcription cannot represent everything featured in the original spoken language, it follows that any transcription is an interpretation by the transcriber of what is being said" (p. 47). Interviews were, therefore, transcribed as soon as possible after each session, and every effort was made to provide an accurate record of the discourse. During the process of writing each candidate's story, the audio tapes were reviewed many times and the story was told, as much as possible, using the candidate's own voice.

## Data Analysis

"*Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.* They do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study; rather, the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together" (Bogden & Biklen, 1982). Data analysis was begun by becoming totally immersed in the experiences related by the study participants in order to note any themes which seemed apparent. Specific content analysis was carried out by analyzing interview data for impressions, themes and sub-themes. Data were categorized and coded and key themes and impressions were allowed to emerge. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) have noted:

> The process of data analysis, then, is essentially a synthetic one, in which the constructions that have emerged (been shaped by) inquirer-source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes. Data analysis is thus not a matter of data *reduction,* as is frequently claimed, but of *induction* (p. 333).

Consequently, every effort was made to allow the themes and categories to emerge naturally as the beginning teachers told their stories.

## Trustworthiness of the Study

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "the comprehensive member check is thus of critical importance to the inquirers, the respondents and the consumers of the inquiry report" (p. 374). Throughout the study, responses were checked with participants in order for them to review and make additions or deletions if such revisions were necessary. Before and during follow-up interviews, participants were given the opportunity to examine their original interview transcripts in order to verify, revise, or elaborate on all responses. In addition, the researcher maintained detailed and current files on each participant, wrote

regularly in a reflective journal after each interview, carried out a detailed and comprehensive content analysis, consulted with peers, and presented the findings in a descriptive manner, thus facilitating the reader's full understanding of the context in which the responses were given.

## Organization of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is organized in the following fashion: Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the literature. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 introduce the beginning teachers Sabine, Terry, Nancy, Tammy, and Brad, and present their profiles. Individual stories describe each teacher's university preparation for teaching, expectations of teaching, realities of teaching, and completion of the first year of teaching. Following each teacher's story is a commentary which identifies a dominant theme unique to that teacher. Chapter 6 outlines the common themes that emerged from these five beginning teachers' stories, as well as the researcher's impressions, recommendations, and conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE

### Literature Overview

The discussion of related literature is divided into the following sections: (1) beliefs and attitudes about teaching and teachers' work life held by beginning teachers during and at completion of preservice training; (2) beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of teachers during their first year of teaching; and (3) teacher induction as one method of addressing the needs of beginning teachers.

### Preservice Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes

First year education students' beliefs about teaching were examined in a study by Wodlinger (1985), who found that education students enter their preservice training holding liberal beliefs about teaching and learning in schools.

> This is shown, for example, by responses that suggest: (a) students need to become involved in their own learning, (b) students want to understand the nature of their learning, and (c) the educational process, as a social activity is important to society (p. 57).

He also observed that this entry into teacher education is viewed initially from the perspective of a secondary school student. "It logically follows, then, that as preservice teachers progress through their training, their perspectives change from those of students to those of teachers" (pp. 62-63). Thus begins the long journey from student teacher to professional teacher.

Wodlinger's findings are corroborated by Tardif's (1985) study in which four student teachers were followed through three university semesters in order

to examine the process by which students become teachers. Participants' beliefs and attitudes shifted from a liberal to a more conservative stance as they moved through the various phases of the practicum. "This involved a shift from the progressive liberal orientation expressed by the participants in phase I to a more conservative, traditional, and authoritarian orientation when acting as teacher in phase III" (p. 146).

This study also indicated that there is a loss of self involved in the process of moving from student to teacher:

> For the student teachers in this study, experiencing the self as teacher was often one of accepting the definitions imposed by others. . . . In some instances, to the participants, becoming a teacher meant renouncing parts of their personal selves while acting as teacher in the school setting. By accepting labels ascribed to the role of teacher as doer-facilitator, implementor, planner, disciplinarian, the student teachers (and possibly teachers at large) accept restricting their experiencing of self to one narrow dimension. Becoming a teacher in this sense can be a growth-inhibiting experience (pp. 146-147).

The movement from the role of student to the role of teacher is examined by Miklos and Greene (1987) in a study where graduates of Alberta teacher education programs were surveyed as to the value of their preservice preparation. Their findings support other studies indicating that "there is a need for teacher educators to be concerned about the integration of theory and practice as well as about the transition from student to teacher roles (Horowitz, 1984; Tardif, 1985; Turner, 1985)" (p. 203). In addition, the acquisition of practical classroom skills was viewed by graduates as being the most valuable topic in their preservice preparation. "Rated highest in importance by teachers were skills relating directly to the organization of a classroom such as organizing for teaching, motivating, and communicating with students, and learning from

experience" (p. 195). These findings support Wideen and Holborn's (1986) contention that new teachers do not feel that their preservice programs have adequately prepared them for the classroom (p. 202). This contention is further supported by Young and Bosetti's (work in progress) study in which the difference between expectations and realities of the first year of teaching emerges as a key theme.

## Experiences of Beginning Teachers

The experiences encountered by teachers in their first year have been documented at great length by many researchers. The term "reality shock" has been used to describe what happens to the beginning teacher when the theory from his or her preservice training clashes with "the harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life" (Veenman, 1984, p 143). Veenman's research findings indicate that beginning teachers commonly experience problems in the areas of classroom discipline, student motivation, accommodating individual differences, assessment, and parent relations.

In Canada these findings were corroborated by beginning teacher participants in a seminar provided by the Manitoba Teachers' Society (Ferré, 1990) and again in a study which examined the needs of beginning teachers in Newfoundland, (Covert, Williams & Kennedy, 1991), which found that problems identified by beginning teachers in Newfoundland were in the areas of classroom discipline, student interaction, instructional management, resource utilization, personal motivation, student evaluation, public relations, and communication. This study also indicated that there is a difference in need between new teachers in urban and rural areas.

In her study of the growth experiences of four first-year elementary teachers, Olson (1991) found that these teachers needed support in a number of

areas. They identified a need for support of growth choice facilitating a sense of belonging, support for a reciprocal arrangement where ideas could be shared between new and experienced teachers, support through comparison with others, as well as the right amount of support at the right time. In addition, they indicated a need for recognition and for specific concrete and practical resources to help them cope with the problems for which preservice training did not prepare them.

One method of assisting new teachers in bridging this gap between expectations and realities is through teacher orientation designed to provide ongoing assistance and support during that crucial first year. Presently there appears to be a plethora of orientation methods already in use in school districts across North America. In her description of the growth experiences of four beginning teachers, Olson (1991) indicates that these individuals' orientation to the teaching profession has been provided by fellow staff members. A comparison of informal mentoring and more structured orientation programs is presented by Klug and Salzman (1990), who conclude that a structured program is of more benefit to new teachers. Marks (1989) discusses a formal induction program in which successful participation is required for teacher certification. Thus it does appear that efforts are being made by school districts to provide support, advice, and assistance to new teachers. Yet the question remains: are these programs effectively addressing the concerns of new teachers?

## General Teacher Induction Program Models

There is certainly an identified need for induction programs which will ease the transition from student to teacher and bridge the gap between expectations and realities of the first year of teaching. Griffen (1985) reports on the results of a study by Ryan, Newman, Mager, Applegate, Lasley, Flora, & Johnston (1980),

which identified the nonexistence of appropriate programs designed to improve the lot of the beginning teacher. He also indicates that, according to Goodlad, (1983), new teachers, rather than teaching as they learned to teach in preservice programs, teach as they were taught when they were students in elementary and secondary schools.

Huling-Austin (1986) argues the need for induction programs to improve teaching performance, to increase beginning teacher retention, to promote professional and personal well-being, and to satisfy induction/certification mandates in some American states. She also cautions against expecting induction programs to be a panacea for education in general. "The idea of induction programs as a means to help beginning teachers have a smoother transition into teaching is tremendously promising. At the same time beginning teacher programs cannot be expected significantly to reform the education process as a whole" (p. 5).

According to Fox and Singletary (1986) successful induction programs must perform four functions.

1. Develop a psychological support system for the teacher, focusing on self-perception and attitudes likely to result in increasing commitment and retention.
2. Assist in the development of acceptable methods for solving problems that typically confront new teachers, especially methods of classroom management and discipline.
3. Help develop the skills necessary to transfer the pedagogic theories received in preservice courses into appropriate teaching practices.
4. Provide experiences in which new teachers can begin to develop professional attitudes and the analytical and evaluative skills necessary to maintain a high level of proficiency in a continually changing profession (p. 13).

They also stress that course instructors should be from outside the beginning teacher's school district because of the evaluative connotation associated with district administrators or curriculum consultants.

Burke and Schmidt (1984), when discussing the implementation of an entry year assistance program, provide information on program components and the roles of both the school district and the university. An interesting feature of this model is the use of retired university personnel as resource people.

An indicator of the importance of effective induction models is again shown by the number of American states which now require successful participation in these programs as a prerequisite for certification. Smith and Huling-Austin (1986) make suggestions to those who would implement such programs. A beginning teacher should be matched with a volunteer experienced teacher and provision should be made for them to observe each other. As well, there should be seminars and workshops, with the first session occurring a few weeks before the beginning of the school year. Included in this workshop should be strategies for dealing with classroom routines, management, and planning for the first week of instruction. There must also be training sessions for volunteer teachers.

Building on her previous research, Huling-Austin (1986) adds more specific components of an induction program. She stresses the necessity of selecting an interested and competent experienced teacher who is willing to devote the time and energy necessary for program success. Pairing teachers with compatible professional ideologies and personalities is also wise. In addition, both teachers should be teaching in the same discipline with one or more common preparations, they should have a common planning period, and their classrooms should be in close proximity. She also stresses that the program must be flexible enough to meet the emerging needs of the participants.

Within Canada, The Manitoba Teachers' Society (Ferré, 1990) presents the following recommendations for components of successful induction programs:

> Development of such programs needs to include (1) identification of needs, (2) a program proposal and costs, (3) plans for activities, (4) identification of resource persons, (5) adequate administrative support, (6) sufficient funding, and (7) provision for evaluation of the program.
>
> Above all, induction programs must be flexible enough to meet individual differences and be modified as they evolve (p. 10).

Another related consideration involves who should assume responsibility for the beginning teacher. Scott (1987) indicates that the university, the school district, and the local teachers' association all share some responsibility for this function but that the major responsibility for the new teacher rests at the school level, with both the principal and the school staff performing this duty. He advocates the use of a coaching model in order to accomplish this.

Gill (1990) discusses the growing interest of Canadian educators in induction programs which facilitate retention of quality candidates and improvement in the quality of teaching. She indicates that program planning must involve members of all interest groups and that the program must be flexible enough to meet the needs of all participants in both rural and urban areas. The profession must, as in other professions, recognize the difference between a beginner and a veteran. A gap does exist between expectations as developed during preservice training and the realities of full time teaching. The provision of an induction program is one means to narrow that gap.

## CHAPTER 3

## PROFILES OF SABINE AND TERRY

Sabine's and Terry's stories have been placed together in this chapter because both women's teaching assignments involved kindergarten. Sabine's part time assignment was a half-time appointment as a kindergarten teacher; and Terry's part time assignment was a half-time appointment as a kindergarten teacher and a one-quarter time appointment as a teacher of grade two mathematics, health, physical education, and art.

### Sabine's Story

Sabine, a slender brown-eyed, dark-haired woman, was 31 years of age at the time of the study. She described herself as being openminded and "not frightened of new things or of exploring new ideas." She also described herself as a quiet person, but unafraid of expressing strong personal beliefs. As well, it was evident to the researcher that Sabine was a perfectionist, an observation with which she agreed, although she observed that over the course of her first year of teaching she had learned "to try not to put quite as much presssure on myself, to sit back and relax and enjoy the children."

The second of four sisters, Sabine was born in a large city, but spent most of her childhood in rural regions, moving to a small town when she was 3 and then to a farm when she was 9 years old. Once on the farm, Sabine found that she didn't particularly like it. In the town, children could "go to the Saturday matinee and then over to the swimming pool and have free run of the place. On the farm the nearest neighbor was a mile away. So I went from all these 'social opportunities' to nothing." This feeling of isolation remained with her during her

years on the farm.

School for Sabine was, throughout, a very positive experience. Grades one to four were spent in town at the same school. Because the town and the school were so small, everyone knew everyone: the teachers lived in the teacherage across the street, her parents socialized with her teachers, and there was a real sense of community within the town and the school. After the move to the farm, Sabine travelled 45 minutes by school bus to the rural school, characterized by small classes and split grades. Here she completed grades 5 and 6 in one year, an accomplishment which put her in the same grade as her sister, who was just 15 months older. Although this brought about a great deal of competition between Sabine and her sister, she still enjoyed going to school. There were "lots of outings, a good feel to the school, and that same sense of community."

High school, which began in grade 9, meant a longer bus ride and a bigger adjustment in that "there was this influx of kids who didn't know any of the other kids. So that was hard and it took a while to make friends there because there were two different groups." When Sabine had begun high school, there were two classes of grade 9 students, which turned into one class of grade 10 students; and because "all the guys tended to drop out of school and go to work after grade 9", there were only 18 students in her graduating class.

Sabine left home at 17, after graduation from high school, and came to the city where she worked in secretarial jobs for a few years. Although her parents had encouraged further education and were disappointed that she did not go immediately into college or university, Sabine knew that she would go eventually.

A few years later she entered a program in early childhood education at community college. Her next door neighbour had gone into that field, and Sabine felt that she "must have admired her, but not really known it." Attending college

was a positive experience as well "because the college is smaller, the program only has 60 people . . . but again a real sense of community, of knowing everyone." After graduation from college, Sabine worked for 6 years on the university campus at the daycare centre, an experience which precipitated her decision to attend university.

Since time spent in daycare "working directly with the kids and planning educational types of activities, expanding their knowledge " was more challenging than the routines of feeding and rest time, teaching was a logical next step. Sabine entered the Faculty of Education as an elementary generalist with a minor in early childhood. "Because I was on the university campus I started taking night classes. There are a lot of things accessible when you are right there. So there was the motivation to further your education being in that situation." Although she was a bit dismayed at the impersonality of a large university, Sabine thoroughly enjoyed her undergraduate years and was a hard working and high-achieving student.

**Preparation for Teaching**

Sabine's two practicum experiences were positive ones. Her first student teaching round was with a grade six class, and despite her initial negative reaction, was very rewarding. As it turned out, the grade six practicum was the more positive experience in that "it showed me that I could work with older children." Her longer practicum was spent in a kindergarten classroom "and it was wonderful. And then, you know, it just confirmed what I want to be--working in a kindergarten at a really supportive program. It helped a lot."

When reflecting on why her student teaching experiences were so rewarding, Sabine observed that her cooperating teachers were extremely supportive and did not just abandon her. Both teachers freely shared their

teaching resources with Sabine. So, for Sabine, both practica were valuable educational experiences.

When discussing other aspects of her program, Sabine expressed a need for more useful courses covering practical topics. For example, she stated that

> I would have liked a lot more information from my early childhood classes on setting up things--like a parent committee. It's a requirement to set up a parent committee. Information on how much responsibility there really is. Like I have to tell the parents, "Oh, ok, it's staggered entry. You can come in on the Monday, you can come in on the Tuesday and on the Wednesday" I don't feel that I was given enough information that I would have that much responsibility.

**Expectations of Teaching**

Despite her very positive student teaching experiences, Sabine anticipated her first year of teaching with nervousness, apprehension, and excitement. When interviewed before the school year began, she was particularly concerned about whether or not she could fill the shoes of the experienced and popular teacher she was replacing. The previous teacher had been in the school for five years, and Sabine would be teaching the younger brothers and sisters of this woman's students. As well, Sabine had observed her teaching and felt a bit intimidated by her predecessor's proficiency in the classroom. Another of her concerns was that "I have a tendency to take on too much, so I may have plans that I want to do but they may be totally unrealistic, and I'm just not sure. And I just want everything to go so well that I may be fiddling with little things in the room that are unimportant."

Sabine had no illusions as to the type of time commitment which would be required of her as a first year teacher.

> I'll be in early, early. I think the classes don't start till about ten to nine, but my goal is to be there by 8 A.M. I'm going to be checking over everything to make sure it's all in place, and if I'm using any equipment, to make sure it works--all kinds of things. For the first little while I'll be going for recess with my children because they're so young. I've been given advice from other teachers, so yes, I'm going to take that. Over the lunch hour, I'm hoping that I'll get to know the other teachers. You know, talk to them, solicit advice if I need it and I expect I'll be there later in the day and won't get home till about five, five-thirtyish.

She was also very aware of the types of adjustments she would have to make in her personal life in order to keep teaching from taking over her life.

> I think I will have to make an effort to do things for myself. Teaching could overwhelm everything else. I could be spending all my time at it. So I'll have to make a really conscious effort to get away from that. Just one weekend a month completely out of the city, or take an exercise class or something just for myself.

Regardless of these initial feelings of apprehension, Sabine did, however, feel confident that she would be able to do the job, identifying enthusiasm, organization and communication as her strengths. As a result of her daycare experience, she also felt confident about interacting with young children and added that she loved kids and was excited about working with them.

Before the summer began, Sabine knew her school placement and teaching assignment, a half-time morning kindergarten position. She described the school and the community with pride.

> My school is small which is great. . . . There's one kindergarten, one grade one, one grade two so it's very, very small and I'm happy about that. It's an older school. The neighbourhood is transitional--lots of elderly people are slowly moving out and new families are moving in so I

see it as a neighbourhood that will be growing.

She had been offered an afternoon kindergarten assignment in another school, but had turned it down, choosing to remain part time in the one school. Doing this, she reasoned, would be better for her students and allow her to do a better job in her first year.

Although she had not yet met any of the teaching staff, Sabine had met with her principal and, with administrative approval, had already made some decisions about one aspect of her program. "I've decided to try home visits . . . so I have met the parents and the students who will be in kindergarten. And that has made me feel a lot more confident."

**Realities of Teaching**

Three months into the school year, Sabine felt that she was experiencing a very successful first year. Although she had been a bit overwhelmed in the first month, she believed she was coping well. Report cards had been a minor setback to this feeling of accomplishment in that she wondered if she had gathered enough information to report to the parents of her kindergarten students.

> [A]nd then it's like "Oh no! Have I observed all of these many different things?"--and those kinds of things. And now, too, it's like "Well, I need to cover this and this and I want to do this and there's only so much time." With half time, they are here at a quarter to nine and they're gone at twenty three past eleven, so it's a short day. Really short.

Sabine did, however, feel that the year was progressing much as she had expected it would. She also felt that working half-time had a lot to do with how well she felt she was managing her work load and the accompanying stress.

"Being part time has lessened the stress. Now I think [about a full time teaching assignment] oh, I don't think I could have done it."

She was already reflecting critically on various lessons she had carried out in her classroom and, through trial and error, was finding the most efficient methods of sequencing daily activities for her students.

> And I changed my schedule quite a bit the first couple of months. I thought, well, when we first come in we'll come and we'll have our calendar time and go into centres and then we'll have gym just before recess. Well, that didn't really work because they're hot and sweaty and they go outside, and that's not terribly healthy. So, we'll have our gym after our calendar, but no, because then they forget what's happening in the centres when we come back from gym. So it's those kinds of fine-tuning things that I'm still working on.

Sabine's classroom reflected the importance she placed on community. Her learning centres had been carefully arranged in order to facilitate interaction and to build a sense of community in her students. Bright, attractive posters and displays covered every available bit of wallspace, and student work was displayed everywhere. The room was a busy, happy place.

She had recognized the intrinsic value of working with children and unhesitatingly identified her students as being the best thing that had happened to her thus far in the year. "The kids are, of course, in that they're excited. Like today, we were reading the December poem and they're noticing things like the word 'we' and it starts the same as 'Wednesday'--and things like that are really exciting!"

She had also learned the importance of outlining expectations to parent volunteers, and then of following through.

> The worst was probably my first field trip. I thought it would be great. I

> had tons and tons of parents and I thought I was well prepared, and told them my expectations, and we went down to the ravine and I just felt so uncomfortable because I had so many parents that they kind of treated it like "Oh it's just taking our own kid on a walk" and so there were children running here and there and I'm calling them together and I just didn't feel very positive about it at all. So that was probably my worst, just going through that and trying to figure out what would I do differently next time. And did the kids enjoy it? Was it just me who was so stressed out? Or was it a rotten experience overall?

Determining the best way of establishing and conducting routines had been a problem that Sabine had not anticipated. The manner in which she solved a problem with physical education indicated her ability to deal effectively with similar concerns.

> And then once you're in the gym, what do you use to get their attention? Thank goodness I started using a tambourine right off, and it has worked like a charm. Once you teach the signal 'freeze to the tambourine', you've got it made.

Sabine remarked on the unpredictability of the teaching day in terms of her students' needs:

> It's just that once the kids are here and once the day starts, all your plans may be thrown away depending on how the day is going and how well they can sit and listen, and all the rest of it. They can only listen so long.

She also indicated that the day could be unpredicatable in terms of the attendance of her parent volunteers. "One day I had a parent who mixed up the day she was coming in, and I said 'Oh you're helping me out today.' She thought I was joking and then she didn't come." She had developed strategies for coping

with these unanticipated occurrences. "What I try and do for my parents is I plan to have them do things over and above what I would be doing, so that if they're not here, my whole day won't fall apart."

Although Sabine's teaching day was finished before noon, she rarely left the school before 3:00 in the afternoon and also worked at home in the evenings. She detailed the amount of time she was spending on her half-time position.

> I thought I would spend a lot of time here, and because I'm part time, I probably spend more time here than I would if I was full time, because I probably wouldn't stay until 9 or 10 at night, but you add on the afternoon, and I'm here until 2:30 or 3:00, or sometimes later. So that throws everything back. You get home later and you don't feel like cooking a meal, so you sit and relax for a while. You're not eating until 6:30, 7:00 and you still want to relax a little bit. And before I know it, it's 8:00 and I have to touch up on my lesson plans.

Similarly, she indicated the way in which teaching was "spilling over" into the rest of her life.

> I haven't got any of my Christmas cards done, I haven't visited any other programs that I thought I would, I haven't been to the [book warehouse], I haven't been down to the [materials laboratory]. All those things I had hoped to do this week, and I just don't know if I'll be able to do them. And then you try and squeeze in a little bit of Christmas shopping.

Sabine also made note of the compromises that were necessary in her private life in order to accommodate her kindergarten program. One such compromise involved the combination of shopping for home supplies and shopping for school supplies.

> Sunday we went grocery shopping, my husband and I, and I also had to buy cooking supplies and everything for the month of December [for the

> kindergarten class], so you're trying to work on two levels there. I spend a lot of time doing school work. I've been out to a movie or out for supper but it [school] is always there.

She also observed that she had not found much time for herself.

> I keep thinking maybe next week. I'm looking forward to the Christmas break, that's for sure. Well, this week, I've got a parent coming Monday, and I told her I'd get her this film from NFB, and I thought I could pick it up tomorrow, but no, because I'm in charge for an extra day, so I'll have to do that Friday, but that's the day I wanted to go to the [materials laboratory], and make buttons for the kids for Christmas gifts, so now I'm thinking, well I don't know, and then we got invited to this wedding tomorrow night so, I don't know. I still need to practice organizing my time better I guess. You can't control things that happen, though.

Being evaluated had caused Sabine a small amount of anxiety. She mentioned that having a visitor in her classroom writing things down made her a bit nervous. At the time of the December interview, she had been evaluated once by her principal, and had received excellent feedback. Central office personnel had been invited to Sabine's classroom, but had not responded specifically as yet. The anxiety she had felt about evaluation had been reduced considerably by the practicality of her earlier daycare and community college training.

> I have a day care background and I've got two years from community college. And that has been a godsend when it comes to the management type things, knowing what to put out. That training has helped me probably more than university, because it was more practical.

Sabine expressed little concern about fitting into a very large organization.

She saw herself more as a part of her individual school than as a member of a larger organization. A meeting with the superintendent and a small group of other teachers did, however, help her form a perception of her place within the organization.

> I did go to a round table meeting with the superintendent, which was interesting. Because I'm so new, I hardly know what's going on, so I kind of sat back and listened to that. I'm pretty small down on the ladder of things.

Sabine made use of various kinds of support during her first year.

> The teachers here have been great. If I'm doing something and they've got ideas, they're very willing to share. The principal, too, is always here if I've got a problem, or something. She's always got lots of ideas to share. I've kept in contact with some of my friends from university. I went to the early childhood conference and talked [to friends] there. The teacher here, who I replaced, I've been in contact with too and she sends me things, so that's really good.

When questioned about the biggest difference between her expectation of teaching and the reality she was experiencing, Sabine replied that she had not expected so much direction from other sources.

> You get all this mail in your mailbox about this priority and this and that and the other thing, and it's like when do you find the time to implement all of this? I mean, I'm more worried about the day to day--let's get the lesson plan out and let's accomplish what we can with the kids. I didn't think there would be so much other stuff happening on top. Like the school board expects this to be happening in your classroom, and your principal wants this, and the parents want this. There are just a lot more people and organizations involved than maybe I thought.

Sabine was surprised at the lack of teaching resources in her classroom. She mentioned that there had been far more equipment in her daycare than there was in her kindergarten classroom. She felt that perhaps the smallness of the school (130 students) was a factor. She did have a small budget but was unsure of how to spend it, and was a bit daunted by the responsibility for making this and other types of decisions. Another aspect of the job that she had not expected was the bookkeeping responsibility.

> [Parents] pay a fee for their children's field trips at the beginning of the year, so just administering that, and making sure that they've paid, and that kind of hassle. I was kind of hoping I wouldn't have to deal with that, but I do. And they've been good, but I don't like hounding people for money.

She did, however, feel that she was experiencing a very successful first year and was very appreciative of the supportive professional relationships she was forming with the other teachers on staff.

**Completion of the First Year of Teaching**

During the June interview, Sabine stated she was pleased that she had experienced such a successful first year.

> I think it's gone really well. I feel really good. I'd make some programming changes and set things up a little bit differently next year, but overall I think it's been very successful. The parents are happy, the children have had some growth, which is important, and so have I, so yes, it's gone well.

She was particularly pleased about the close relationships she had developed with her students and their parents: "You know, a real sense of

community and belonging and that--you're an important part of their life and you've had some impact, and I think that's the biggest thing that's happened," and mentioned how difficult it would be to separate from them at the end of the year. "It's going to be hard to say good bye and watch them continue on."

When asked to describe the worst experience of her first year, Sabine mentioned a situation with one particular student which had turned into a bit of a power struggle.

> The other day I had a child and we were letting our butterflies loose out on the playground and she spotted a cat and she just zoomed right after it so of course I had to go and say, "We can't be attacking stray cats and running out of the playground," and all the rest and got into a real power struggle with her. And then I felt really bad afterwards because I knew--it had turned into a power struggle and I just felt at my wits' end when I had to pick her up and carry her into the school and she was angry at me and I was frustrated with her and I mean that kind of ruined my whole day, to say the least. We talked about it afterwards, and it was OK, but moments like that are just terrible because you know you are responsible for their safety and yet you know when you are five and you see a cat and you just want to run. So the challenge is just to balance the two. So I don't like those [situations] at all.

When discussing what she had learned about herself during this first year, Sabine observed that she had learned not to put so much presssure on herself. She indicated that she had gone through phases where she felt she had tried to do too many things at once and had wasted time worrying about things that were not very important.

> I need to remind myself to sit down and enjoy the moments with the children instead of, "Oh, I've got this on my plan and I'd better get it out there and make sure it gets done," because learning happens all the time and I need to appreciate those little moments too, instead of always

> being worried about the big things. And it's hard to do though. Sometimes you just get so wrapped up in where you're trying to go and you forget you're right here right now.

When questioned as to what she had learned about teaching, besides remarking on what a big job it was, Sabine commented on the importance of being organized, but within that organization, the importance of being flexible. "Because you may have the greatest plans ever invented, but if your kids have stayed up late watching some movie the night before, then you're not going to do what you set out to do right away." She had also realized "the importance of setting up a support network within your school too. To be able to call on other teachers and to know that they're there and to use them."

When reflecting on how this was different from what she had expected she might learn about teaching, Sabine mentioned that although she had known that she would have to be organized and that the job would involve a lot of work, she had not expected that the ability to be flexible and to think on her feet would be so important.

> But you can never be prepared for everything. Like someone running off after a cat. You have to deal with that right then, and decide what you're going to do. Or today, Carl's ladybug flew off out of his little container during show and tell. You know, so what do you do? Right then, you have to be able to just forget about your plans. If it means searching the room for this ladybug, that's what you have to do!

Adjusting her pace to that of her students was something else that Sabine discovered to be different from what she had expected.

> I've learned that you can have things out [in learning centres] for three weeks and it may not be until the third week that the children have the time or the desire to sit down and really explore them. And that's what

> you need to remember too. You can't put things out and then take them away too quickly.

Another important realization for Sabine was that she, as the teacher, set the tone for how the school day would go.

> Yesterday was just a prime example. I was not in a good mood and boy, our day did not go well. And I think that's an important thing to keep in mind, that you have to watch your outlook and remain positive and try not to be down, because that's going to come through on how your day goes.

Sabine had also been surprised at her discovery of the enormity of the influence she had on her students.

> And I just feel because I'm the first teacher of many of them, how far is this influence going to go, too? Is it something that will stay with them? In some ways I hope so, and on other days I hope not.

One rather unexpected reward of Sabine's first year of teaching was the close bond that she had formed with her students. "I knew I'd get close to them, but you really feel like you know them well and you're a real part of their life, and they are a part of mine too."

Sabine had found her first year to be challenging, yet very rewarding, and expressed a real satisfaction with the job she had done as well as with her choice of career.

> I think it's a good profession to be in, because it's one of the few professions where you can get immediate rewards too. You can have those little daily ones like "Yay, Charlotte's finally writing her name!" It's taken all year, but it's happened. Or a child who finally asks someone to join in their play instead of barging in. Those little things that can happen everyday just make you feel like it's a worthwhile profession to be in.

Since she had experienced such a successful and rewarding first year, Sabine was angry and upset to learn that she would not be granted a contract for the following year.

> I'm frustrated, because you're led to believe, in school and in everything else, that if you work hard and do a good job you'll be rewarded. And this isn't the case. [My principal has said] I've done a great job, my [students'] parents have written to the Associate Superintendent and the Superintendent [but] it's meaningless. So that's the hardest part, to know that you've worked hard. It's depressing.

She was, however, appreciative of the fact that her principal had kept her abreast of everything that had happened throughout the year in terms of her contract, and that the news had been broken to her by her principal with compassion and sensitivity. "[She]'s very good, my principal. She kept me informed of what was going on and the possibilities and I probably knew in April, the beginning of April that the chances weren't good."

Sabine, along with other teachers new to the district, had been informed that she was "the cream of the crop" at various district inservices and meetings earlier in the year:

> and then attending all these functions for new teachers, and that. They say, "Oh, you're the best" and "You're wonderful" and all the rest of it, and it's really good to hear that, but you kind of wonder do they say this every year, and do they really mean it?"

Thus she was understandably very disappointed by the nonexistent communication there had been from this same district about her ineligibility for a continuous contract.

> The whole idea of going part time I thought it was in the children's best interest, in my best interest. You know better for the system to make that choice, and yet that's part of why I wasn't eligible for a continuing contract. By making the decision to do a better job, or so I thought, then well too bad. You don't have enough hours in. So even though they say that the children are most important, I'm doubtful of that.

It was also upsetting for Sabine when there was no official thank you for a job well done.

> But I'm kind of annoyed that you don't get a letter, or anything official like "Gee, you've done a good job. We regret whatever--that we're unable to offer you anything." Just nothing from up higher. You're just a little number to them obviously. And I don't think that's very considerate.

It further frustrated her that no one from the district's central office had been out to the school to observe or evaluate her. "[My principal] knows my program and has been in and out, but no one from downtown has been in to observe, so I think they need some work there."

Besides being angry with the district, Sabine expressed some disappointment with the teaching profession in general for, as she saw it, misinforming prospective teachers.

> I'm not impressed with [this school district], for sure. I'm quite angry with them. Teaching as a profession is what I want to stay in, and continue in. But I think perhaps the [provincial teachers' association] needs to get out there and be a little more realistic with the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of education students who are out there right now, and let them know that the reality isn't as rosy as you're led to believe. Because I think that that's a fact that at university they are [saying] "Oh the projection is that in '92/'93 there's going to be a teacher shortage" and I don't think that's fair.

So, at the conclusion of a very successful first year of teaching, a disillusioned Sabine was searching for another teaching position.

> Oh, I'm job hunting. It's tough. I'm just in a lot of turmoil right now. What to do. I want to teach. There's the supply teaching option, but after having my own classroom for a year, I'm not sure I want to move from school to school to school every day and hope that some kind of temporary thing comes up. I just don't know if I want to do that. So I've got my resumés out and I'm searching, and it's tough, really tough.

Thus for Sabine, the biggest difference between the expectation and the reality of her first year of teaching was that:

> You're led to believe that if you work hard and you do a good job, you're going to succeed. And yet right now . . . it hasn't worked out that way. Teaching is a great profession, but I think they need to be honest, I really do.

**Commentary on Sabine's Story**

The idea of smallness and a sense of community was a common thread throughout Sabine's story. Her happy childhood years in a small community together with her very positive experiences in a community college program of only 60 students indicated how important this was to her. The detail that Sabine was able to offer about her school and the neighbourhood it served, before she had even begun working in the community, further indicated the importance of a sense of community to her. The emphasis Sabine placed on this concept was evident in the way in which she organized her own classroom, using learning centres as small communities within the larger classroom, and was also shown when she spoke of the close and supportive relationships she had formed with

her colleagues, her students and their parents.

Although Sabine had been offered two half-time assignments in different schools, (and, therefore, different communities), she chose a single half-time teaching assignment in the one small school. An ironic consequence of this decision was that she then became ineligible for a continuous contract because of an insufficient number of teaching hours.

Another impression from Sabine's story involves her university experience. It is interesting to note that she did not aspire to be a teacher until, as a result of her university daycare experience, she became aware of the opportunities available to her. When speaking of her teacher preparation, Sabine mentioned that both practica were useful experiences and that she had gained confidence in her teaching ability as she realized that she was quite competent working with older children as well as with younger ones. She also expressed a need for a more practical aspect to her university course work indicating that, for example, it would have been helpful to know how to set up a parent committee, deal with parent volunteers, or prepare report cards. In fact, what had prepared her for this organizational aspect of teaching had been the practicality of her daycare background.

In terms of managing her teaching day, Sabine had discovered the necessity of being organized, yet flexible within that organizational framework. Responding to cues from her students instead of trying to exclusively impose her own agenda on them had enabled her to relax and enjoy the intrinsic rewards of working with her kindergarten children. It was obvious to the researcher that she was well prepared, both professionally and personally, for her first year of teaching.

## Terry's Story

Terry, enthusiastic and outgoing, was 22 years of age at the end of her first year of teaching. The older of two children, she lived with her mother and younger brother in a city suburb. Terry identified her mother, a teacher, as having been the most significant influence in her life. "She's always been there for me, always stood behind me in everything I did." However, she reported that she had never consciously thought that because her mother was a teacher, she would be a teacher.

Although there had been a brief period of unhappiness during her parents' divorce, Terry remembered her elementary years as having been busy and happy, mentioning involvement in such activities as Brownies, swimming, and gymnastics, as well as jazz, tap, and ballet dancing. Similarly, junior high was, according to Terry, "the best" as this was also a time when she was busily involved in many activities both in and out of school.

High school, on the other hand, was a different experience since Terry became involved with a young man six years her senior and this relationship, she felt, set her apart from the other students. It was while she was in high school, though, that Terry made the decision to become a teacher. She had participated in a work experience program and had been placed in a kindergarten classroom. "That made me decide right then and there. I want to be a kindergarten teacher."

### Preparation for Teaching

Terry began her post-secondary education at a community college and then transferred to the university where she completed her Bachelor of Education in the Early Childhood Program. It was a difficult program to gain admission to and, since she was an average student, Terry felt fortunate to have been

accepted.

She spoke disparagingly of the initial practicum round where students observed various practicing teachers.

> I thought that was useless. That's where you sit and observe and I didn't learn anything at all from that. I was observing a grade eight and nine class, and the lady wrote on my evaluation that I didn't take enough initiative, and nobody's *ever* said that about me. But what are you supposed to do? You're supposed to sit there and observe--so was I supposed to jump up in front of them and say, "OK class, my turn?" She didn't give me any chance, but anyway, that's over.

Her longer practicum experiences, however, were more enjoyable. For the four week practicum, Terry went to a grade five classroom in a small town just outside the city. She was a bit apprehensive, since all of her experience had been with very young children, but she received excellent feedback and she reported that the experience "boosted my confidence knowing that I could teach a higher grade than kindergarten. I just loved these kids."

Terry's final practicum round, an eight week placement, was in a kindergarten classroom in the suburb where she lived. It was, as well, a positive experience.

> It was the most wonderful experience I think I ever had in my life. It was the best. And my cooperating teacher, she was a wonderful teacher, we became friends, and it was just great. I've come back to [university] after that and heard stories that people had awful times [in the practicum] and their cooperating teachers were terrible, and I think that I was just so lucky to end up with these two great teachers.

Terry felt that most of the courses she had taken in the Faculty of Education had provided her with a sound theoretical background. Yet she still

did not feel that either her university courses or her practicum experiences had prepared her for the reality of beginning the year with her own students and the responsibility of working with them throughout the school year.

> The kindergarten [practicum] has prepared me a lot, but what I'm really worried about is that they never prepared me for the first day of teaching. I have some idea, but I'm not totally sure about what I'm supposed to be doing right now. Nobody prepared me for September; for what happens when the kids first come. What do you do? I guess the first few days you have meetings, but I don't know anything about this stuff. Nobody's ever told me. . . . I know how to plan lesson plans and units, but not for a whole year.

**Expectations of Teaching**

One week before classes were to begin, Terry still had no idea of her placement or her teaching assignment. This uncertainty heightened her feelings of apprehension and also caused her some frustration since, as she indicated, she would have spent the summer planning for instruction, had she known what she was going to be teaching. Nonetheless, she was still looking forward to her first year of teaching.

> But besides being scared, I'm really excited about it. . . . I want to be in my classroom. I just couldn't wait to get out of university and go into the classroom because that's what I've been wanting to do forever. So I'm really excited and I keep on thinking of how much fun I'm going to have with these wonderful kids and everything. Just if only I knew where I was going.

Despite her feelings of uncertainty, Terry expressed confidence in her ability to do the job, citing her love of children and her good classroom management skills as two of her strengths. She also felt that she would have no

difficulty getting along with other staff members.

> I feel confident just within myself in that I know I'm going to be a good teacher. And I know that the children are going to enjoy the lessons that I plan for them. I'm going to be setting up centres and everything and I know that they like that. And I'm confident that I'll get along with the staff because I usually get along with people fairly well.

Specific worries for Terry were whether or not the children would like her and how she would deal with parental expectations and concerns. "What kind of expectations are they going to have for me, and are they going to like me? Am I going to be able to deal with them in the right ways?" Of particular concern to her was the point at which her professional life left off and her private life began.

> I'm just wondering because I like to go to the bar and I like to have fun like that, and I'm just wondering can I do this if I'm a teacher? Maybe in some other city, but not here. What if somebody sees me? And I don't know really how strict they are. I know that once I'm a teacher, I'm a teacher everywhere, and I have to kind of watch what I do. But it's not like I go out every night and party, but I like to have fun. But what do parents expect of you? What if they see you doing this and this? What will they think?

In describing what she anticipated a typical work day would be like, Terry spoke in detail as to how she would set up her classroom and what types of activities she would plan for her students, adding that she had formed her ideas through the influence of her excellent cooperating teacher. She was also very aware of the time commitment involved in the first year of teaching and indicated that although she was going to try to achieve a balance between work and leisure, she realized that there would be time for little else except school in this important first year of her career.

**Realities of Teaching**

Placed in a small school in a middle-class, city neighbourhood, Terry began her first year of teaching with a half-time kindergarten assignment for the first week of September. At the beginning of the second week the assignment was increased to include grade two mathematics, health, physical education, and art, boosting her teaching time to 77 % of full time. Terry's pride in her work was evident in the careful and painstaking manner in which she had prepared intricate exhibits for her students, created challenging learning centres, and displayed her students' work on every available wallspace in the classroom.

At the time of the second interview in mid-December, Terry felt that she had adjusted to the demands of her teaching assignment, and that her first year was progressing well. "But it's going fine. Like you have your days when one day could just go awful and then the next day is absolutely wonderful, and you're like 'oh this is why I'm here.' So it all makes up for it." She felt particularly fortunate to have been placed at her small school. " . . . and then I got this school, and it's , oh, it's just absolutely wonderful. I love it here. . . . I'm really enjoying it."

Like Sabine, Terry saw herself as more a part of her school than as part of a large organization. "For me, I think it's more school oriented. . . .There are about 10 teachers in this school. And so there's your 10 teachers and it doesn't seem to really go too much further than that." She had attended one of the Superintendent's coffee parties and was impressed with "the top guy just talking to you, like you are real people."

Although Terry had felt well prepared for her kindergarten assignment, citing her student teaching, babysitting and day care experiences as valuable training, she had not felt at all prepared to teach the grade two mathematics. She had made use of support and assistance through after-school district

inservices and had found them to be helpful.

> And I also went to about two or three inservices. I had applied to go to about six, but they were all booked, of course, so I got to a couple of them, which really helped. Like math. I went to the one for grade 2 math, and that was a life saver. Even though it was only about an hour long, not even, because she kind of rushed through it. Just the ideas that she gave me, and saying, "You know it's OK to follow a workbook, but just do these extra things," and I thought, "Oh, thank God!" because I thought I was going to have to set up all these centres, but how am I going to know what they're doing? So I just follow Math Quest. We have 80 minutes of math on Monday and Wednesday and then 40 on Tuesday, and I usually give them about half that time just for practising and for centres and stuff, and then we do the workbooks, so I don't feel so bad.

In addition, Terry was very appreciative of additional support she had received informally from the experienced teachers on staff and from her principal.

> Oh, there's lots and lots of support from the teachers on staff. They are absolutely wonderful, and the principal--I just feel so lucky, ending up in this school because everybody's great, even the principal. You can say anything and everything to him, and it doesn't faze him. The grade one teacher--my first day before I had to start with the meetings and stuff, I was setting up my room and she came in and talked to me and just totally made me feel at home. Anytime I have a problem I can talk to her, ask her anything. Even the principal, I can ask him anything. Anytime there's something that I'm worried about or that I have a problem with, or a student or a parent, I can just tell him anything and they [all of the staff] are really supportive, really helpful.

A pleasant surprise for Terry was her first experience with parent-teacher interviews.

> One of the best things that happened was the parent-teacher interviews,

> because I was so scared about them. But then once they happened, I had so much fun. The parents were wonderful. They all said really good things and that the children were enjoying it, and they really liked [their children] being in my classroom. And so every single one, not one bad thing, I could not believe it. So I guess that's one of the good things because I had feedback from all the parents. And no matter what happens between people that observe me or whatever, I know that if the kids tell the parents that they are happy, the kids are happy, the parents are happy, that's what counts, so I thought "well that's good."

In the weeks just before Christmas, Terry experienced several unexpected changes to her teaching day and was able to make appropriate adjustments to her daily plans.

> I had planned for the grade 2 to teach them math this afternoon. There's no switches today, this week, but she [the grade 2 teacher] said "I won't be here so you've got to do [math]." But then I went in there and there was no way we were going to do math, no way, so we did art. They had been doing art since 9:00 this morning, decorating and stuff. And even the kindergartens--every Monday we always have show and tell and letter of the week and they go to the library. And all that was cancelled today, so it totally throws them off. Because we had to practice for the Christmas concert.

Something Terry had not anticipated and wondered how to deal with was the type of student problems with which she was faced.

> Like I have a couple of children with behaviour disorders and attention deficit and everything. And I didn't really expect that in a kindergarten room. . . .They shouldn't have any problems, but they come to school with a lot of baggage from home and different things that they've been through in their lives. That's something that I really didn't think about: How am I going to deal with these children? All children are so different. They all have different needs. How am I going to deal with that? I never

really thought about that.

She also expressed concern that her kindergarten class had nearly doubled in size in the past three months, and worried that she was not paying enough attention to her mid-level students.

> And I started off in this classroom with I think I had 13 children. I have 23 now and the number is going up and up and I'm just getting scared, you know. . . . Like there are some kids who are just kind of in the middle and get left out because the ones that misbehave all the time of course you're always giving them your attention, and then the ones that are super intelligent or super good, well you're giving them your attention. And then the ones in the middle, it's like OK, I'm forgetting about six kids here. Where are they? Because they are always doing their own thing and they're not a problem in either way.

Terry identified a visit from a school board consultant as having caused her some anxiety because the class did not go the way she had anticipated it would.

> I just thought she was going to come in here and see me and she was going to tell my principal all these wonderful things about me and how wonderful my class is. And she came in here and it was an absolute disaster. I could not believe it. I was just devastated because it was just-- From the minute the kids walked in to the minute they left, it was awful. Because then she had to talk to me all through the lunch hour. It wouldn't have mattered what she said to me. Whatever happened in the room before that just wrecked it. Because the kids were just off the wall. I thought they'd listen, and they didn't listen to one thing I said. It was like I wasn't even in my own classroom. It was like they weren't my kids. So that was the worst thing, when she came to observe me and everything just went down the tubes. But then she did talk to the principal afterwards, and said she had enjoyed herself and everything and I think "Yeah, right!" But she said there are no major problems or anything like

> that. It was just me, because I've always had all these expectations and then I didn't follow through. So I was upset at myself and my kids. I was really angry, even though I had no right really to be, I was angry at my kids for what they did to me. "How dare you?" And then the next day they were totally, perfectly fine. We had a wonderful day, so, then you try to forget about what happened the day before.

She had, however, developed some coping strategies to use if, as was the case with the consultant's visit, it was clear that an activity was not working out the way she thought it should.

> But what I mainly did is that if something goes bonkers I can always rely on the centres. At least with that I can say "OK you can have free choice," and then I can just take two seconds, put myself back together again and say "OK. What am I doing here; what's going on?"

From this experience Terry had also realized the importance of being sensitive to the needs and moods of her students.

> But what I have to do is learn to read the children more. Like obviously if they are antsy while sitting down there, they shouldn't be there. They should be doing something unstructured, something where they can make the decisions, where they are in control instead of me.

She had also learned the importance of being able to think on her feet and make necessary adjustments to her lessons.

> So that's what I did when that lady [from central office] was in here. We had gone into the gym, they were too noisy, they were not listening. They were lying on the floor and rolling around. Oh God. And we were supposed to be doing role playing. Actually we were doing the hokey pokey and then role playing. So I brought them back here, and gym was supposed to be for 20 minutes, so I thought "What am I going to do?" So

> what I did, I just sort of backed everything up. Whatever they were going to do after gym, I had them do that. I had a little craft for them to do, and then all the rest of the time I just let them have free choice. It was good that I did that because anyway she told me that they didn't have enough centre time. . . . At least there's always the centres.

Although her principal had made several informal visits to her classroom, Terry was not evaluated formally before Christmas. She did not anticipate that her principal's formal evaluation would cause her as much anxiety as did the earlier visit from the consultant. "I don't think I'll be as nervous. Because the kids know him and I think they'll interact with him differently than she did."

The fact that she was managing to find a balance between her personal and professional lives surprised Terry somewhat. She had found that she did not really have to give up as many social activities as she had originally expected.

> I thought, oh, I'd have no social life or anything, but I still go out Tuesday nights for my two dollar movies. Except I go to bed a lot earlier now, about 10:00 instead of midnight or one, because I'm always tired.

**Completion of the First Year of Teaching**

Terry's assessment of her first year of teaching was that it had been both successful and rewarding. She was surprised by how quickly the year had passed.

> I think all in all for my first year teaching, it has gone just great. I can't believe that there's only a week and a day left of classes. I can't believe it. It's like where did the time go? Just a couple of days ago it was Christmas time and we were just celebrating Christmas and getting all ready for that holiday and now it's over.

When asked to identify a particularly positive experience in her first year,

Terry mentioned that, in addition to caring about her students, one of the best experiences for her had been when she had taken her kindergarten students bowling.

> And now the last couple of weeks are just absolutely wonderful, you know, and I just love them all to death. On Tuesday I took my kids bowling with the grade 4's and that was just the most wonderful experience I've ever had with these guys. It was just so much fun. Even the kids that have trouble doing simple little things were getting high scores and beating everybody. And I thought that was just wonderful, it was just really neat.

About teaching in general, Terry had learned several things:

> You have to have a lot of patience. I always thought I had so much patience, you know. Anybody can push me as far as they want to. I learned that I have none, this year. Well I do have some, but I've lost my patience a few times with kindergartens and the grade twos. I've learned that teaching is not always just teaching. It's lots and lots and lots of classroom management, behaviour, solving problems with the kids. It feels like there is 70% of dealing with behaviour problems and 30% teaching. And I thought it would be little bit more on the other side. But I think I've gained a lot of experience this year, dealing with the certain kinds of kids that I've had, because in my student teaching, there were no problems that I knew of, like I do here. I've had to get some of my kids tested, like even in kindergarten, and I never would have dreamed of that. So now I feel like I have that experience now. Like I know how to fill out all the forms, and get the psychologist and this and that. And I think I have learned this year, through teaching, how to communicate with the parents, because I think I was kind of scared about that in the beginning. And I just love it now. I love the interviews, I can phone up parents, I can talk to them, no problem at all, and I was kind of worried about that. So I've learned to do that.

This was different from what Terry had expected in that she had not expected to experience such positive relationships with the parents of her students. Another aspect of teaching which was far different from what Terry had expected was the number and type of problems that her kindergarten students had.

> But I didn't expect to have to deal with as many behaviour problems as I did. And filling out the forms and--I have a kindergarten student who is going to an opportunity class, and I didn't ever think that kindergarten ever dealt with those kind of things ever. It's hard to say because I didn't really know what to expect at all. I really had no clue.

About herself, Terry had learned one important lesson:

> That I can lose my temper very easily. That's one thing I thought, "Oh boy, I'd better work on this," because once in a while I would just lose it. And I thought I would never do that, especially to the kids, but they, especially the grade two's, they push you so far, I just go over. So I learned that I can lose my temper and before I never ever did.

When reflecting on the difference between what she had expected from her first year of teaching and what had actually happened, Terry stated that the year had gone far better than she had initially thought it would. She had been quite apprehensive about teaching the grade two math and had surprised herself by being very successful at it. Like Sabine, Terry had discovered the intrinsic rewards of working with children, as illustrated through her experience coaching track and field.

> And then all of a sudden the grade 1's 2's and 3's wanted to join track and of course I thought they should be allowed to, because they were so interested in it so I took over that. So I worked with all the grades 1's, 2's, and 3's at once. There were about 25 of them. Every Tuesday and

> Thursday we went out and practiced track. And they ran in the Klondike Relays. I think we were the only school that probably had grade 1's running. They were running against grade 6's and everybody. That was probably one of the neatest experiences I ever had, taking these kids to the Klondike Relays. Five thousand people; they were on the track, everyone watching them and seeing them run. Even though they didn't come in first, I trained these guys, and that was really neat. I didn't expect to do that at all. . . . And that's something that in this school the track team was number one. That was an important thing. So it felt really good to be a part of that.

Terry first learned that there would be no job for her the following year, not from her principal, but from a newspaper article.

> It was kind of in a roundabout kind of way. He [ the principal] never told me anything directly. I did read it in the paper. Before I found out I read where it said [the district] would be laying off 171 teachers and 71 of the teachers would be retiring and 100 of those would be first-year part-time probationary or whatever, so I thought OK that's it. I'm history now. And I thought oh maybe there's a chance because all the teachers [at Terry's school] said "Oh you have no problem. You'll be here next year," and this and that. I was sick in April for like a week. It was after spring break and before Easter. I missed all those days. And I phoned my principal one day to talk to him about something and he says "Oh, by the way, before you find out from somebody else, I want to tell you right now that I have to post your job." I kind of knew that was coming, but I thought just because he has to post my job, there still might be a slight chance that I still might have this position because somebody might not want it. And then nothing happened after that.

The final news regarding her job situation came from a conversation that Terry had to initiate.

> I waited and waited and waited and waited, and nobody told me

anything. I didn't know anything. And then one day I just casually asked him, "Well what's happening here? Have you heard anything yet? Do you know what's going on?" and he said "I have good news and bad news." So I said "Well what is it?" and he said "Well, I don't have to post your job." I thought "Oh, great! That's good news!" and then he said "Because there's someone in the school that wants your job."

After experiencing such a rewarding year, it was particularly difficult for Terry when the teacher on staff who was replacing her came, in mid-June, to Terry's classroom to find out about the kindergarten program and to see the room which would be hers the following year.

When the lady came in to ask about stuff, and I said "Oh, have you ever taught kindergarten before?" she goes, "No, this will be a first experience for me." So they're just going to start all over again because you know I have everything. I set up a new report card, everything, this year.

Terry's bitter disappointment was obvious, understandable, and exacerbated by the fact that a colleague was taking her job.

Last night I was thinking and I got so mad. I want to go into the principal's office and take everything out of there that's mine so she can't use it next year! And then I thought, "No, that's not right." Because I implemented all these things in here and now it's just gone. I'm out of here and she's just going to take over and that's it. I have no say in the matter. So I am a little bitter. I know I really shouldn't be, but I kind of am. Like last night I went home and I cried all night, because I thought, it's the final thing. This is it. After she comes in here--like she says, "Well I'm not trying to take over your classroom or anything." Well [why doesn't she] wait till the last day and ask me or something. Not now. You know I'm on this big high with all these activities going on and then it just *pfft*--dropped.

Terry expressed frustration with the existing system of seniority within the

district: "I don't think it's fair because my evaluation was excellent, my letter of recommendation from [my principal] was excellent, and I honestly don't think it's fair." She was supported in this by the parents of her students.

> [O]ne parent whose child is going to be here next year said to me, "I don't think it's fair that just because somebody has a contract they get to come in and take over your job. It should be based on job performance, not on if you have a permanent contract or not." I said, "Yeah, but I have no say in the matter." I've [spoken to] two parents that are going to have their kids here next year. One said that they were going to write downtown, not that that would do anything, but just to write a letter downtown saying that she wanted me to stay, and I thought "Wow! This is really neat! All these parents are behind me!" . . . But it feels so good just to know that they're behind me even though it may not help.

She did, however, feel satisfied regarding the job she had done: "But for me, I know that they like me, and I think I've done a really good job here. And everybody has said so." Terry realized that even though she was upset by the outcome of her first year, she still wanted to be a teacher.

> So, of course I still want to be a teacher. I mean, I absolutely love children, and I had such a great year. For a first year of teaching, I had the most wonderful principal anyone could ever ask for. And wonderful staff. Everybody's been so supportive. That's another reason I don't want to leave here. It's a great school and--"

At that point in the interview, Terry broke down and began to cry.

The fact that she would not get to see her students continue on in school was the greatest disappointment of Terry's first year of teaching.

> It's just been thinking about it and knowing that I'm not going to see my little guys next year in grade one and I'm leaving the whole entire school. That has been really hard, especially in the last couple of days when

> yesterday I had to [take] the teacher that's taking over my classroom and show her around the classroom and tell her everything that was in here. . . . Yesterday I think was the absolute low I've had regarding teaching, just because I know that I'm not going to be here. Because I love it so much. I love the kids. Like even today with the track meet, it's not just the kindergartens and the grade twos that I teach; it's every grade. The grade threes I've worked with because I was the track coach for grade one, two, and three, and I've worked with the grade fours because we're buddies with the grade fours. It's all the kids. I'm going to miss them so much. . . . All the other teachers are saying "Aren't you excited? There's only one more week left of school. I can't wait till summer." No, I'd rather be here. I don't want to leave. If I knew I was coming back here to see the kids, then fine. Like it's not just the fact that I don't have a job, it's the fact that I won't see them. Because I get really attached and I'm going to just miss them so much.

By mid-June, nearing the completion of a very successful first year of teaching and in addition to everything else required of a busy teacher at that time of year, Terry was sending out teaching applications for positions anywhere in the province.

### Commentary on Terry's Story

The common thread running through Terry's story seemed to be her complete, genuine, and unbridled love of all of her students. This was demonstrated when she expressed concern over the number of very serious life problems her young students had already encountered, and again when she worried that, during classroom instruction, she might be overlooking her mid-level students. This love of children was yet again shown when she rejoiced over the success of her academically weaker students' high scores on the bowling field trip and through her obvious enjoyment of her young track team.

Terry's two cooperating teachers had been significant influences on her teaching. Her confidence-boosting practicum experience with the grade five students and her success with the grade two math effected, for Terry, the realization that she was quite capable of working with older students as well as with younger ones. Although she had received ample assistance from her cooperating teachers in terms of daily and short term unit planning, Terry expressed a need for assistance with long term planning for a complete school year. She also identified a further need for assistance in dealing with attention deficit and behaviour disordered kindergarten students, since nothing in her professional training or life experience had prepared her to instruct students with these types of problems.

Terry was very appreciative of the valuable support and assistance she had received, both formally from the district and informally from her colleagues on staff. An unexpected bonus of her first year was the very positive and supportive relationships she had formed with the parents of her students, many of whom had written letters to the district's central office in an effort to save Terry's job. Terry also expressed appreciation of and confidence in her principal, despite the manner in which he had informed her of the loss of her teaching position.

When considering the year as a whole, Terry expressed surprise over the small percentage of the school day that was spent in actual classroom instruction, noting that many of the tasks which she was expected to do had nothing to do with teaching children. Although she had learned the importance of being organized for both the instructional and managerial aspects of teaching, she had also learned the importance of being flexible, especially when acknowledging and responding to cues from her students.

Despite her earlier concerns about how much public socializing she would

be able to do as a teacher, Terry seemed to have found the balance between her professional and personal lives, mentioning that she had not had to give up too many activities. Loss of job notwithstanding, Terry had experienced a first year of teaching that was challenging, yet fulfilling, both professionally and personally.

# CHAPTER 4

# PROFILES OF NANCY AND TAMMY

Nancy's and Tammy's stories have been combined in this chapter because both women were both full-time elementary teachers. Nancy's assignment was a combined grade two/three class and Tammy's assignment was grades one through six music in the mornings and grade two in the afternoons.

## Nancy's Story

Twenty-eight year old Nancy, the only teacher in the study with prior teaching experience, had taught for two years in a small rural jurisdiction. A self-described perfectionist, she was, during her first year of teaching with this school district, undergoing a separation and divorce after five years of marriage.

The eldest of three children, she had grown up in an Eastern city. Her two younger brothers were heavily involved in sports and Nancy, the family academic, sometimes felt that she did not fit in. Since the family had emigrated from England when Nancy was three, there were no other relatives living in Canada, which also contributed to her feeling of disconnectedness.

Elementary school was, for Nancy, a very happy time and she identified her grade four teacher as having been the person who had most influenced her in terms of her decision to become a teacher. Another important influence had been her mother, Nancy felt, in that she had modelled a love of reading and had reinforced to her children the importance of a good education. Grades 9 through 12 were spent at a country school, but a house fire during Nancy's senior year had forced the family to move. This was a traumatic time for Nancy as the move

meant that she had to attend a different school for her final year of high school. It was, she stated, a lonely experience.

**Preparation for Teaching**

Nancy described herself as an average student throughout her university years. Although she was never at the top of her class, she did know that, because of her determination, she would always "get through". She entered a university in the East, planning to be a home economist, but in her second year found the sciences "really too difficult" so she moved to a literature-based program and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts. She followed up her arts degree with a Bachelor of Education from a Western university, taught grade four for two years in a small rural jurisdiction, and then returned to university where she completed a Master's degree in Educational Administration.

Nancy's two practicum experiences were very different.

> The first one was with [a large school district] in a 5-6 class in a rather have-not area of the city. It was a nightmare because first of all, I felt that the cooperating teacher just got student teachers for the money and he just handed everything over and it was like sink or swim, here you go, and sat back and had people do the work for him, with very little collaboration and very little thought going into it at all. That was a four-week practicum that ended at Christmas, and of course with that kind of experience you feel like just throwing in the towel and becoming a gas jockey or a waitress or something. But fortunately I hung on and for my long practicum I was in a grade two class for eight weeks with a teacher I would describe as a mentor-teacher--just really excellent--and gave me a really positive feeling about what I could contribute to education and how I could help children. And that really gave me the boost to keep going. So I think you really need a positive experience and you really need someone that you feel comfortable asking questions with and experimenting with--just the idea of risk-taking.

Nancy felt that she had been well prepared for certain aspects of teaching, but not for others.

> The planning, and the contact with parents, and the working together with other staff members. I feel that my student teaching has prepared me for those aspects. It hasn't, I think, fully prepared me because I didn't have all the responsibility of a class. And that is one of the things when you walk into the room and, hey, you're responsible for these kids and the accountability stops at your door, whereas before it was kind of a shared thing that you were taking on with the cooperating teacher. And I guess that in that way student teaching couldn't prepare you for that because it is not like having your own class until you actually do.

**Expectations of Teaching**

Nancy approached her first year of teaching in her new school district with feelings of apprehension and isolation.

> I have been given a contract but don't know what school I'm going to be at; I didn't really have any personal contact with anyone except the person I signed the contract with; I received some information in the mail in regards to an orientation [meeting]; but I guess generally I feel a combination of isolation [and] trepidation.

In fact, the whole process of acquiring a position with a large school jurisdiction had been, for Nancy, a bit of an emotional roller coaster.

> [I]t was kind of a series of peaks and valleys. For instance, when I first applied and as I was finishing my program and looking forward to starting teaching, I sent in my resumé and got the sense that no one was being hired, so I was way down. And then, when I got the phone call for the interview, I was way up. And then, when I went to the interview and came back and didn't hear anything for weeks and weeks, I was way down

again. And then I got the phone call to come and sign a contract and I was way up. And this all took place over a four-month time span. And then I'm with a contract for two and a half months without a school, so then I'm down. And now as the first day of school approaches and I'm still not assigned to a school, it's just an excruciating feeling of "Where am I going to be? What is going to happen to me?" . . . Just that kind of idea of peaks and valleys, just with the anticipation and the anxiety of it too.

The day before students were to return to school, Nancy still did not know her school placement and thus had many unanswered questions which contributed greatly to her high level of anxiety.

> What school am I going to be at? Who am I going to be working with? Will there be any kids whose special needs I don't have any experience with? So will I have a lot more learning to do before I even start?

She was also concerned about her role within a large organization.

> Another worry is just how do I fit into this system, into this huge school district? So many people have said you're just a number. So how am I going to be able to adjust to that? There seem to be so many things that I have to find my way with.

An additional concern of Nancy's was the constant wondering if what she had to offer would be enough to meet the needs of her students.

> Even though like I say I'm flexible and I'm prepared to do whatever is needed, there is always that sort of self-questioning: "Is this going to be effective?" And it kind of holds you back because it wastes so much time. That whole process of "Well I've spent X number of hours doing this. Is it going to be good enough?" . . . It's that self questioning.

Yet despite all of her anxiety, Nancy did feel confident that she would do a good job for the children in her care.

> I feel confident that the basic caring and concern for children is portrayed in what I do, so that I'll be able to establish a rapport with the kids, and establish an atmosphere of trust, so that they're able to learn and feel comfortable learning with me. I feel confident that I'll be able to contribute something to the staff and that I'll be able to develop a rapport with the staff.

In addition, she was very prepared to do whatever it might take to make her year a successful one. "When everything is said and done, things are going to go well, because I'll make them go well. Even if I have to stay there all day Saturday and Sunday, I'll do things until they're right."

Nancy identified flexibility as one of her strengths as a teacher.

> I don't even know how you could exist in a classroom if you're not [flexible]. If you can't roll with the punches; if you can't take the day as it comes, and be prepared to just make whatever changes are needed to maximize the kids' learning. To find out how the children learn and to tailor your instruction to that. So you can't just say "This is my program. This is what it looks like," and just go barrelling through like someone with blinders on. So being flexible is a strength.

Based on her earlier teaching experience, Nancy had a very good idea as to what a typical workday would entail:

> Early start. Kind of a little bit of social chit chat with the people I meet in the morning, bouncing some ideas off people, basically looking over my plans, making any changes which I guess would be last-minute, depending on what time of day when they were going to be changed. And then I guess the number one thing of what my day would be like is

> that my attention would constantly be in demand. My presence. There's not one moment from the minute that first child comes in the room that there's not going to be something that will be required of me. So I guess the kind of day that I foresee as being typical is a day when you are constantly in demand, and that you have no time to think of yourself . . . . A day of communication, a day of experimentation, a day of rolling with the punches, a day of "OK we planned this but--" an ever-changing day. Every day is different and some days it goes exactly how you planned it and you just go through like that, and other days, from start to finish, it's different. But a long day, a busy day, a day when you are constantly in demand.

and she fully realized the time commitment that would be demanded of her:

> You have homework just like your students have homework. Teaching will fit into my life because it is my life. It will be the first priority for me and then everything else falls behind it, so it will be a twelve or sixteen hour a day activity for me. And I guess, being by myself [separated from her husband], it's not only what I enjoy doing but it will be good to have something that I can put all of my energy and all of my effort into.

**Realities of Teaching**

Nancy's teaching assignment ended up being a combined grade 2 and 3 class with 12 grade 2's and 9 grade 3's in a new, wealthy area of the city. Her class was the first combined grouping in the school's two-year history. Consequently, Nancy had found the assignment to be extremely difficult at first because of the negative parental reaction to the philosophy of combined grouping.

> Well, it got off to a little bit of a rough start. It is the only combined grade in the school so there was quite a bit of parental backlash. They didn't understand the philosophy behind mixing the groupings of kids. They thought that the slow 3's are put with the high 2's and all these kinds of

stereotypes that we have. And I think for the most part that that's been overcome but of course there are still the logistics of trying to cover two curriculums, which is challenging.

However, after three months at her new, modern school, Nancy was working hard and thoroughly enjoying many aspects of her job.

The staff are great to work with, the building is beautiful, the facilities--you couldn't ask for a nicer setting. I don't really think the work load has let up any. There is still the same nonstop pace as from the beginning of the year. I was hoping that as we got to Christmas it would sort of have settled in a bit but I'm not really finding that, so far.

When questioned as to whether the year was much different from what she had expected, Nancy replied that it was not.

Not really. In my practicum [and earlier teaching experience] I got the sense of the nonstop, the full days, the unending demand for your attention from 6 and 7 and 8-year olds. But I guess the year has been, if anything, even more than what I expected. Because of course when you're starting out at a grade you've never taught before, and in this case, two grades, you're having to learn all that curriculum and kind of do about five things at once all the time, and as well as get involved at the school level and those kinds of things that take up noon hours and after school.

She mentioned one unexpected, but positive, occurence.

Since October, I've had 15 of 21 students' parents volunteer in some way or another in my classroom, so that's a really high percentage of involvement, and I was really pleased with that. And, I say in some capacity, either in the classroom, or providing resources, or being a telephone contact for other parents--those kinds of things. So I guess that's a pleasant surprise to know that there is the support and that when you do call upon the parents to get involved they do so.

When asked to identify the most positive aspect of her year, so far, Nancy responded unhesitatingly, "The warmth of the students and the welcome of the staff."

The most negative experience of Nancy's year had occurred early in the year at her school's Meet the Teacher Night, a social evening where parents accompanied their children to the school to meet their teachers. Nancy's principal had instructed her to use this opportunity to speak to the parents of her students about the combined grouping in her classroom.

> The meeting set up by the administration on Meet the Teacher night to address the parental concerns about the 2/3 combined class. I felt that the kids shouldn't have been here at that time. I felt that it should have been a parent meeting. I also felt that the administration should have been here as they made the decision and it was imposed on me two days before school started. So I wasn't really able to field the concerns of parents who said that they pay just the same amount of taxes as the people in the next room, yet their kids weren't in a combined grade. Those kinds of concerns. So that really made me feel kind of unsupported, and it got things off to a much rockier start than they needed to have, I think. The meeting went a good hour and forty minutes because there were so many things to comment about and, as I say, I didn't feel it was appropriate for the students to be here for that. And it sure would have been nice if there had been either an assistant principal or a principal here so that some of the decisions they made before I came could have been explained, or supported by them.

Nancy felt that nothing in either her training or life experience had prepared her for this negative parental reaction. "I wasn't prepared for the animosity of the parents because of the split grade." She also was not prepared for the lack of communication in her school. "I wasn't prepared for the instances where I felt that more communication at the school level would have been really helpful to

run things smoothly."

Yet there were other areas in which Nancy had felt very well prepared.

> I suppose the language learning would probably be the thing I am most prepared for because the philosophy that we use now is such that you are working so individually with children so that the program really is in place and then you just individualize it for the students you have.

Nancy identified several strengths which she felt were serving her well, within both the school and her classroom.

> Getting along with others. The skills of cooperating and communicating with others; patience I would say is a very big one with young kids; kind of a sense of responsibility and respect because you've got to model those things for young kids, and if you can't I don't think you're doing your job. Organization, a sense of efficiency like I've got this to do so I'd better get it done. Seeing a goal to its end. The idea of planning ahead, being organized, the idea of being a model of patience, of politeness, of respect. Those things I think are so important with young kids. Honesty is a big thing. You've got to be able to admit that you've made a mistake. It's a credibility thing, not just with the people you work with, but with your kids too. So those kinds of things.

Nancy, like Sabine and Terry, saw herself primarily as a member of her school staff, and school responsibilities took precedence over district activities.

> Very rarely do I see things in that "big picture". I went to the orientation at the beginning of the year. There was a chance to meet the Superintendent but that was the Monday of report cards so I declined. So other than specific times to be involved at the district level, I kind of feel like it's just whatever is happening at the school. Unless I make the effort to find out things or to--other than reading the district bulletin and those kinds of things--I kind of feel like I'm just here in this little world without much contact with the central office. But the exception to that

> would be of course the early childhood consultant who did my evaluation today and then I also went to an inservice on student evaluation. So I've had some connection, but other than that, it's just really the school that I really have any attachment to.

She had made use of various types of support at both district and school levels. "I got some ideas on evaluation in the context of [this district], and those were helpful as well, although followup information has never been received. Informally, other teachers on staff, other teachers in other schools."

Evaluation had caused Nancy some stress in that her formal evaluation by her principal and her evaluation by the early childhood consultant from the district had taken place within three days of each other. Although she had felt well prepared for these evaluations, she had still felt some anxiety.

> I've been working myself up to kind of a little bit of a nervous state about how things would go, and it really wasn't worth the pound of licorice nervously, because everything went fine. I anticipated that--well I guess too it helps to spend at least one day of every weekend here since school has started and stay here until quite late every evening, so I feel that I'm at enough of a comfort level to go home and feel fairly organized for the next day.

Nancy had felt additional stress because it had been necessary for her to be absent from her classroom the day before the formal evaluation by her principal. "The day before the principal came in I had a sub because I had to go on an appointment for one of my students, so I had overplanned for the sub and then I also was overplanning for the time I would be observed." She also expressed concern that, other than the one formal evaluation by her principal, she had not received any administrative feedback regarding her teaching performance. She felt that her stress over evaluation would have been reduced

considerably had she known that her principal actually thought she was doing an outstanding job.

> The feedback I got was really really positive and I guess maybe I'm just a pessimist looking for something wrong, but how come I never got that sense in the day-to-day things that if you felt that way could you bring that across in the day-to-day things? So there would be no need for me to be anxious then for someone coming into visit.

In terms of unanticipated daily happenings, Nancy felt that she was coping well.

> I had moms scheduled to come in to volunteer who didn't come, and I didn't receive any phone call as to why they didn't come. So then if I had X number of things for them to do in preparation for something else, and they weren't here, then I had to do it myself. So then that's a little bit of scrambling--maybe going down at recess to do it to get it finished so that I wouldn't have to do it after school. The other unexpected thing was that I had signed up to help with the computer club and another teacher made up the schedule and just showed it to me the day that I was supposed to be on, so when I was thinking that I'd have the lunch hour to myself then I turned out to be supervising the computer club, so again, you just kind of shuffle things around because your time isn't yours.

For Nancy, the biggest difference between what she expected from her year and what was actually happening had to do with the parents of her students. Although she was quite sure that she "could make things work in the classroom and that the students would enjoy being here, and they would learn," she had been very concerned about the way in which parents indicated that they were not happy with the combined grouping.

> Some of the parents were just downright hostile in that third week in September, so not only did I have the first week of school where they

stood outside my door wanting answers as to what would be happening in a combined class, and would not take no for an answer, or would not take "Please go and see the principal. I'm busy with the kids" as an answer. That hostility spilled over to me bending over backwards to try to win their support and to try to show them that "Hey, this is going to work and this is going to be a good year." So that was a big difference from what I expected.

Another aspect of teaching that Nancy had noticed to be different from what she had expected had to do with teachers in general.

It seems to me that we're a very accepting bunch. We take on more than we need to. No matter what it is, teachers don't seem to say no, so to say that something was different than I expected kind of breaks down somewhere because I've never really at any point said "Hang on a second; I'm not prepared to do this after a certain point." So maybe that's something we all share in common--being so accepting of things, of heaping on the responsibilities of having the 12-hour days.

**Completion of the Teaching Year**

In June, when reflecting on her year, Nancy felt that it had gone well.

For the most part, it's been a really good year. Very busy, it's been a challenge to combine the two groups, to meet the parents' expectations, to meet my own expectations, to meet the learning needs of the kids. I've learned a lot from the other teachers that are here.

When asked to describe a very positive experience, Nancy mentioned two incidents that were real highlights for her.

Last week, when the parents found out that the first year teachers hadn't been given contracts, a parent wrote a letter of reference for me and sent a copy to the principal and to the personnel department and to [school board officials], and it was just the most beautiful letter and it was so

supportive and I just was thrilled. I didn't ask for it, and it just came as a complete shock. That was real nice.

And also, last Friday when we started out the day, a couple of moms were here that shouldn't have been here and they said, "Could you take a coffee break for a few minutes?" and I said "Oh, OK but I'm getting suspicious!" and I think they've planned something for me because I'm leaving. So it makes you feel good.

When questioned as to what she had learned about teaching in general, Nancy responded that her year's experiences had reaffirmed many things that she had already known about teaching and about herself.

It has reinforced how absolutely essential it is to get along with staff members, how much more you can accomplish when there is good communication amongst the staff, and good communication to the parents about your program, how much it helps to have parents as volunteers, how much more you can get accomplished. . . . I've learned that nothing has changed. I'm still a perfectionist. I still have writer's block when it comes to writing report cards because of the parents' expectations. That teaching will consume you if you allow it to, very easily. That it makes no sense to give up every weekend of the school year because you'll just be so burnt by July that your two month holiday won't be enough to recuperate from the year. I learned that I'm impatient with people that don't give new things a try, and that you can never stop trying to find different ways to help kids learn because you have to do so many things to get it to work.

For Nancy, the biggest difference between expectation and reality had to do with parental attitudes toward combined groupings. With regard to the parents of her own students, Nancy felt that she had made some real progress.

It's funny because I had two parents come to me before the community knew that I didn't get a contract. Two parents who at the beginning of the

> year were marginally upset about their children being in a combined group said "I would really like so-and-so to stay with you next year in grade three." Which was like a complete turnaround.

So it was a severe disappointment for Nancy when, after all of her hard work in changing parental attitudes about combined groupings, her principal succumbed to school-wide parental pressure and told parents that if their child had been in a combined grouping one year then that child would not have to be in a combined grouping the following year. She also found this statement hard to take in light of the budget cutbacks which had eliminated her job and felt certain that there would be more combined groupings in the school the following year.

> [T]he principal has said that there was so much parent backlash about [the combined grouping issue] that if [students] are in [a split class] this year, [they] won't be in it next year. Yet next year, given the numbers and the budget, there will be three combined grades here. So it's like, get used to it. So it's kind of like a horse pill. Swallowing it because you can't afford any more teachers or you can't afford to run smaller classes. Yet [philosophically] it's supposed to still be a positive education experience. So [the principal] is kind of backtracking and saying, "Well, it has lots of benefits but we'll only make you do it for one year." So the politics of it never really died down.

Nancy described the way in which she had been informed by her principal that she would not have a teaching contract the following year.

> I was told that we usually know the end of March. As March break was approaching, my principal said we're not going to know until the end of April, in all probability. So I had an extra month on the hot seat, and of course in that month I'm thinking budget is a consideration, a huge consideration, and there's a chance that I might not get a contract. The principals' meeting would have been Wednesday the 28th of April, and my principal knew I was waiting and waiting to find out. She said she

> knew on Wednesday. She came to my door at 20 after 11 on Thursday, and said "Can I speak to you after school, please?" and there was only one thing she might have needed to speak to me about, and I thought if I got it she would have told me then and there at the door. So I knew. I didn't even ask "Does that mean I didn't get it?" I just said "Yeah, I'll see you at 3:30." Kind of like I don't even need to ask. I know what the answer is here. And at 3:30 I went to her office and she said she's done everything she can but there is no job; there's no contract for me.

She also indicated the bitter effect that the news had on her.

> So how do I feel about it now? Not really any better. Like I said before, I am kind of feeling like what do you get for working so hard? Nothing. Well, not nothing. You get some nice letters of reference, you get a good evaluation, but then it's at kind of a dead end. . . . It's just a big disappointment because you think you work so hard and what does it yield? It yields "Catch you later."

When asked about her thoughts on her professional future, Nancy replied that she wasn't sure what she would do.

> I am just rethinking teaching right now because I don't want to hang on, do something else for a few years until things get better, then come back again. I've already taken the time to do the Master's so I'm not needing that kind of a change. And I'm certainly not going to take Special Ed or go and take French to find one of those positions because it's more lost time out of the work force, so I'll have to look and see how much sense it makes to actually stick it out as opposed to trying something else. So I have not decided on that for sure.

Although she was trying to remain positive about her professional future, Nancy's disillusionment with her situation was evident. "But it's kind of a disappointment to really really put a lot of yourself into something and get positive

feedback and then the ultimate feedback is 'Well you're good but we don't want you.'"

### Commentary on Nancy's Story

A dominant motif of Nancy's story was the many experiences, both positive and negative, that she had undergone with the parents of her students. Nancy's class was the first combined grouping in the two-year history of the school, and Nancy had found it very difficult to cope with the hostile parental reactions. Parents demanding explanations of the combined grouping decision had demonstrated their hostility by lining up at her door or actually interrupting her classroom instruction. These difficulties had made September a very stressful month, and had resulted in extra work for Nancy in terms of educating the parents about the philosophy of combined groupings.

Paradoxically she had formed positive relationships with the parents of her students, as evidenced by the many individuals who had volunteered in her classroom, and the letters of support that were written at the end of the year in an effort to save Nancy's job. Nancy had found it immensely satisfying when two parents had requested that their children remain with Nancy in a combined grouping the following year.

That Nancy was able to change these negative parental attitudes toward combined grouping was a good indicator of the skills she had brought with her into teaching. Her eight-week practicum experience with a strong cooperating teacher had reinforced for her the importance of modelling expected behaviour and work habits for her students, and she felt that she had been well prepared for teaching. Yet she did mention that the practicum had not prepared her for having her own class, a responsibility she took very seriously, as demonstrated when

she wondered if the choices she was making were the right ones for her students and again when she indicated that she was prepared to keep on working at her lessons, as long as she had to, until she knew that they would go well. Nancy also mentioned the importance of being well organized, but within that organizational plan, of being flexible enough to deal with situations as they occurred, both inside and outside the classroom. She was grateful for the support she had received informally from colleagues on staff and in other schools, and formally through district inservices.

Having just completed graduate work in Educational Administration, Nancy had made some observations about the administration of her school. She did not feel that it had been appropriate for her to have been the one to explain the combined grouping decision to angry parents at a social evening during which her students were present. Nancy indicated that this and many of the other problems in the school could have been forestalled had the administration taken the time to clarify communication within the school and in the community. She was especially distressed that her principal had known that she had not been granted a continuous contract and had witheld that information from her. So, for Nancy, it was a bitter and disappointing end to a very successful year of teaching.

### Tammy's Story

Tammy, twenty-four years old during her first year of teaching, had been married for three years. She described herself as a very energetic person who was a long term planner and "a bit of a perfectionist". The elder of two daughters separated by seven years, Tammy had grown up in a smaller, family oriented community with a population of 12 000 people. She remembered both her

childhood and her schooling as having been very happy periods in her life.

Tammy's decision to become a teacher had been influenced, she felt, by her positive experiences in school. Her parents had been supportive of this decision and so had her husband, whom she had met when she was in high school. After graduation, Tammy had attended university for one year and then had taken a year off to attend Bible college. She had returned to university the following year and, supported by her husband, had finished her degree in elementary music.

**Preparation for Teaching**

Tammy had been a high achieving student at university, having graduated with distinction. She felt that her strong work ethic and good study habits were skills that she would be able to make use of in her teaching career. She also mentioned that her organizational strength would probably serve her well in her first year.

Like the others, Tammy had enjoyed successful practicum experiences and felt that they had been good preparation for her first year of teaching. She spoke of the generosity of both cooperating teachers in terms of sharing resources and materials they had developed and of how helpful it was to step into a situation where effective classroom routines had already been established. Tammy did feel, however, that because both cooperating teachers had chosen to team teach with her she was not as well prepared as she might have been in the area of classroom management.

> I still never felt that I was alone like I do now. In the practicum, discipline was kind of set up and if the kids weren't good for me then they had to answer to the teacher. And she was always there in the background: "You behave, or you're in trouble!" So this way I just kind of feel like they

> [students] could break loose on me and there would be no one there to pull me through.

Tammy's comments about the usefulness of other university courses indicated that she too had found the theory somewhat valuable, but would have preferred more practical courses. She had learned much about music theory, but had had little experience with the playing of certain instruments.

> I think I would have liked to have seen a little bit more practical because you step into the school and you have three octaves of handbells and I've never used them in my life. How did I get through elementary music and not know anything about handbells?

**Expectations of Teaching**

Tammy, who was particularly concerned about not disappointing her principal or those who had hired her, approached her first year of teaching with a combination of nervousness and excitement. Her nervousness had been alleviated somewhat in that she had already met her principal and a few other staff members. She had known since the previous May that she would be responsible for teaching music to the 250 students in her school, and she had spent the summer preparing for this part of her teaching assignment. She had also been elated to learn that there was a former music consultant on staff.

The school, located in a blue-collar area of the city, was about thirty years old and was very well-equipped. Extra space in the school was leased to a daycare, which brought in extra revenue and a special program for mentally handicapped children within the school had also generated additional funding. Tammy felt that she was luckier than many other music teachers in that her music classroom was extremely well-equipped.

Tammy felt confident that she would be able to do the job. She realized

that she would be putting in many long days and was quite prepared to sacrifice her personal life for her professional one. Her love of children and her willingness to learn were, she felt, two strengths, but she was concerned that she might not be as aware as she felt she should be of all of the resources and materials that were available to her as a teacher. Classroom management was another area that worried her as she approached her first day.

Tammy also expressed an appreciation of the many resources available to her through her school district. She was spending the last week of her summer taking an inservice series for beginning teachers, and this support was proving to be quite valuable and had, she felt, significantly reduced her apprehension about the first week of school. She felt much luckier than some of her classmates who were employed by smaller school jurisdictions. "I've heard from a lot of my friends who are going up to faraway boards that there's nothing at all like that [support], so they are on their own."

**Realities of Teaching**

Tammy's teaching assignment had ended up being grades one through six music in the mornings and a grade two class in the afternoons. One-quarter of the way through her first year of teaching, Tammy felt that she was enjoying a successful first year. Although she enjoyed teaching music, a very teacher-directed class, she was finding it exhausting because "everything is always coming from you, and it's 'repeat after me'" and she had experienced some health problems.

> I've lost my voice twice. Actually this is the first time I've felt healthy since the end of September. I think I was sick from the end of September until the middle of [November] Maybe the last week or so I've felt better. And I guess it's just building up your immunities, people tell me.

She had also experienced a small problem with a few parents who perceived Tammy as being too strict, something she had felt would never happen, and she was encouraged by the support her principal had shown her during this experience.

> I ran into a few parents who were upset because their children had come home saying "[the teacher is] mean" so I had to go through all of that with a parent, and actually it worked out fine. At the parent-teacher interview, he was totally happy. And my principal said that was good. He liked to hear that I was mean once in a while because it meant that I had some standards. But at first I was just devastated. Something that I was always told through my whole practicum was that I'm too soft, too soft. I've got to firm up or I'll never have control, and then to get that was kind of a shock. So that was one of the things that I've worked through.

One of the big surprises for Tammy in her first year was the amount of power that parents in the community seemed to possess: "I didn't think there would be times when I would be afraid of a parent or afraid to reprimand a child for fear of the [parental] consequences," and an incident with a student who had refused to work in class had been particularly stressful for Tammy because of her fear of parental repercussions.

> One parent--her child had gotten quite used to his previous teacher and resented that I had come in, and so the child was "[the teacher is] picking on me and she doesn't like me," and it got to the point where I heard rumours that [the parent] was upset with me and then I felt like I couldn't say anything to [the student], and what [the student] was doing was resigning himself from all of his assignments. So I would give him his work and he'd say "I'm not doing it." We're doing art. "I'm not doing it." We're doing math. "I'm not doing it." So until I got that worked out with the mom, then it just got to the point of fear on my part every time I saw [the mother] coming down the hallway or saw her talking to [the student].

This particular situation also involved the teacher with whom Tammy shared the class and who had been the student's full time teacher the previous year. Tammy described the way in which she had prevented the situation from escalating.

> I approached [the mother] about it and showed her that [the student's] work wasn't finished, and I just said "I sympathize with [the student] because I think that he resents his last year's teacher for leaving him in the afternoon, so maybe he's just taking it out on me." So when she realized that I wasn't blaming it on [the student] by saying it's his fault he's not doing his work, and approaching it like it's understandable, then it's OK.

Although the problem had not been solved completely, Tammy felt that she and the student had at least reached a compromise that she could live with.

> I would say that now he's up to participating in about two-thirds of the class. So I don't think it's totally me anymore. I think he's used to me. It's just an excuse when he doesn't feel like doing things anymore. But just things like that, I never anticipated. I think what parents do is sometimes the child tells them their side of the story and then they're mad at you, and they haven't even heard your side of the story. I couldn't imagine that ever happening. You know, at least hear me out and make it 50-50. Anyway, we have worked through it.

Tammy was also surprised by how much time her nonteaching duties were consuming.

> Just the amount of things that you have to do that are nothing to do with teaching, like lunch money and Troll book orders. I realized that you have to prep, but--cookie fund and things like that. So that has taken a while to get used to.

For Tammy the best thing that had happened to her was that the

potentially negative situations with parents had had positive outcomes because of the way she had handled them.

> I think that the best thing is knowing that those situations were turned around because it was such a worry to me in September and we had parent-teacher interviews and everything went so smoothly. When I came out of the last one and I said to my colleague, "Everything's worked out!" The parents and us have everything going smoothly and there's support from both sides, in most cases. That felt really good.

Since Tammy had worked all summer organizing materials for her music classes, she had felt very well prepared for this aspect of her teaching assignment. Because she did not know until September that she would be teaching grade two, however, Tammy had spent a rather stressful month as she tried to stay one jump ahead of her students.

> I think I felt well prepared for the lessons in music. I didn't realize I was getting grade two so that took al! of September to pull together, and for [the other teacher who shared the class ] as well, because the teacher I'm working with had a K/1 split [last year] and then she had twos this year so this was the first time she had had grade twos so between the two of us, we were scrambling with the last year grade two teacher trying to get prepared, but the music I had all summer to prepare for so that was what I was well prepared for.

Tammy, too, saw herself more as a member of her school staff rather than a member of the district staff.

> I guess you work for [the district], but I feel like I personally work for [the principal] and he's so personable and he treats all of us on staff more like a father-child, not in a condescending way, but if you have a worry it's his worry. So I've felt like it's more of a family situation here than working as one of 4 000 employees.

Although Tammy had been making an effort to balance her professional and her personal lives, she, as well, had found that teaching certainly could consume her life. Like Nancy, she, too, had been coming into the school on weekends but unlike Nancy, she did not continue this practice beyond October.

> I did in September, and maybe one or two in October, but I stopped that, basically on the counsel of my mom because I'm here from eight in the morning till six at night almost every day. My husband and I share a car so I just stay here until six o'clock at night, and I really feel that putting in a ten-hour day and coming in on weekends is too much. You really need to clear your mind. My mom really had to get me through to the end of September because I was starting to phone her at ten o'clock at night, crying, because I was just exhausted, and there were still 50 things to do and I wasn't done yet and I'd already worked fourteen hours. So you're almost mad at yourself. So she just really advised me that if I work till six, then take the evening off. There may be a few things that I bring home on the weekends, like stapling and a phone list of parents that I have to call for costumes or various reasons, but I try to just keep it to those mindless things that I have to do on a Saturday night or something.

She described a very busy week.

> We have the Christmas concert going on right now, so last week I had made a list on the weekend of what I needed [to do], like having the piano tuned and so on, and there were maybe ten things on this list to do. So I think I had eight of the ten things done on Monday. I often come in thinking that they've got to be done now. But you never get a break if you do that. Like you come in, you order the piano tuner, then you have to go down and ask the principal if you're allowed to spend that money, then you get back to your class and you teach and you've had behaviour problems and so you spend your recess in the grade four room making them write notes or whatever, and then you go back to teaching, and then your noon hour comes along and you have a rehearsal for the main speakers, and you've hardly had any time to eat your lunch, and in the

meantime you've agreed to meet with some mother to talk about costumes. This was last Monday. So by the time I got to Tuesday, then I had the piano tuner coming in and he wanted to see me, and then it just went on like that. I don't think I had a break all last week. Tuesday I have choir and now we're doubling up practices. Oh, we're going to go to [a senior citizens' lodge], so I had to phone the head of the seniors' lodge, and I had to get field trip notices ready, so those were written up on Tuesday and delivered to the kids on Thursday, which was our other choir practice. And then on Wednesday I met with the understudies. So Monday I had my lunch free, Tuesday choir, Wednesday main characters, Thursday choir, Friday understudies, and in the meantime I had to phone parents from the parent-teacher interviews that I had missed. I remember I did that Monday. Not every lunch hour is usually filled like that, but--oh, the other thing I did last week is--we block our science--so I taught my magnifier unit last week, so I had a lot more preparation to do, so I would race out after choir and for ten minutes I would fill up water vial bottles, or count out medicine droppers. And I had to put the desks into groups, which I try to do before the kids come, because that's kind of noisy. That was last week.

Tammy had made use of varous kinds of support, informally through colleagues on staff and formally through inservices offered by the school district.

I think I've made a lot of friendships on staff--the other first-year teacher, and [the teacher who shares this class], and with [the principal]. In September, I practically lived in [the principal's] office. I was always there for advice. He helped me set up behaviour management in our classroom and he would pop in and put his arm around my shoulder and make sure everything was going OK. That was excellent. . . . And the other first-year teacher, we've talked a lot, even though she has grade ones so we don't share a lot of curriculum, but sometimes we do for my weak students, and sometimes we just talk. . . . But it's still good having that kind of support. And also from the main office, the music consultant has been very helpful. She's been out to the school, and whenever there's an inservice that she thinks that I would be interested in . . . she'll give me a

> call and tell me when it is. . . . The first year teachers' consultant has been out once to see us. She [the consultant] has little support groups where we just get together for coffee sometimes, and other times she has showed us a film and talked to us about stress, and that kind of thing.

Tammy had found the support group coordinated by the beginning teacher consultant to be valuable.

> I found it really good. When there were others [in the same situation] you didn't feel like you were the only one that's had a bad day. It's very helpful. And she did two days with us last summer, and that was a good start. A lot of the things she said to expect came true, so I was glad I was part of that class.

She also mentioned that in addition to the ongoing encouragement from her mother, the support she had received from her husband and mother-in-law had also been valuable.

> Yes, my husband has been great. He'll cut out letters and make bulletin boards. He's been really good, because he understands it's the first year, and his mom's a teacher, and she's actually given me a lot of resources. She's out of the classroom now and has become a resource teacher so she's given me a lot of things. She'd have a set of 27 and now she only needs 10 so she'd give me whatever she had left, which really helps because those make up a lot of my boxes for those kids that are either behind or that I need to give something to do. So it helps me to focus on my middle group because now I have activities for either side.

Tammy mentioned that, although she felt she was coping well with unanticipated happenings, one such experience had not turned out well.

> Last week a terrible thing happened. We had a cookie fund[raiser] and with there being two teachers in a classroom, we had all the money in one

> envelope, but one of us, and I honestly don't know if it was myself or the other teacher, tucked [one child's order] away in [a separate] envelope, and this was about a month ago. So [the morning the money was due], a sub came in and she just took the big envelope and one of us had tucked this other [envelope] away, so one of the child's orders didn't go in. And I felt terrible because [the children] even get prizes [for selling the cookies]. So I had to tell the kid, "I'm sorry I made a mistake and your order got into the wrong envelope." . . . But that threw me because I was afraid for one thing that her mom would be upset, and rightfully so, and also that [the student] would burst into tears, which she didn't. She handled it quite well. But things like that. That kind of wrecked my day. I felt bad about it all day. Like most things in teaching you can repair them. Like if you were too hard on a child you can say I'm sorry and give them back the toy or whatever. But in that case I couldn't repair it and that really bothered me.

One quarter of the way through her first year, Tammy felt that the biggest difference between her expectation and the actual reality of teaching had to do with classroom management.

> I think I do a lot more behaviour management than I ever imagined I would. And, it's coming. It was my weakest part in the practicum, and it didn't show as much because I stepped into situations where the discipline was already set up, which you largely do in practicum. Also the cooperating teachers are on your side, so the teacher would be sitting at the back of the room, and of course then your behaviour management problems are half. And it never was my strong point so here they were unrealistic and I didn't have a chance to develop them as much. So I think I've had to do that more than I expected. And I've had to work on it as hard as I expected.

She indicated that it was difficult for her to isolate the behaviour causing the problem and equally difficult to decide when to interrupt the lesson and intervene.

> One thing I'm really lousy at is picking out where the problem is--like who

> is the instigator. I am so involved still at this point in where I am in my lesson, and so excited about wanting to teach it that sometimes I'd just rather ignore it [the behaviour]. Terrible, but like doing a recorder unit. We have maybe fifteen minutes to do it, and after I've spent the first seven minutes doing behaviour management, I just feel like ignoring it, saying "I want to teach this" to the 20 kids who are sitting there behaving themselves. So I do start to resent that after a while, that they take up so much of the time--those ten. And you can separate them and you can put them in the hallway and you can send them to the library with an assignment, but you know it gets to be one after the other after the other, and that's one thing that I would like to reduce. I know that there are certain ways that I can cut that time down. And then I've also talked to my principal and found that there is also a time where you do stop fighting with them about it. You keep them from disturbing other kids, but you don't give up on the other 27 just because that one is not behaving. Which is hard to do and I hope it doesn't happen on a consistent basis, but it certainly happens at times.

Tammy mentioned that some university training in behaviour management would have been particularly valuable to her, and that this was an area she wanted to work on for the remainder of the school year in order to increase the options available to her for dealing with various disruptive behaviours.

> Right now, I guess I have a pocketful of things I can do when someone is behaving inappropriately and now I sometimes feel like I just pick out something at random--maybe this one'll work! So hopefully with a bit of experience I'll be able to--for that situation this works best and for that, this works best. At university we talked about the generalities--like the child who always withdraws--what to do in that case, but there's a lot of picky things like kids tattling on each other, and kids forgetting their homework. So you can maybe learn what works best for them.

So far Tammy had been evaluated once by her principal and although it had caused her a small amount of anxiety, she had been pleased with how the

session had gone.

> It was Friday afternoon, but it was the only time in the week that he could come--one o' clock on Friday, so he said, "Don't worry about it; it's Friday and we'll just see how it goes." And I felt that on the whole, it went quite well. [The students] really liked the science unit we were doing so he saw a lot of busy talk on task, which I was really glad about because it's easier to let him see something like that than to make them all be silent in their desks doing a math sheet or something. And I don't really like that style of teaching anyway. We do it sometimes because our class has 27 in it and ten students are very rambunctious. So we do a lot of structured activities, but this was one thing that I could put them in groups for.

Evaluation by the central office consultant would, Tammy anticipated, be more stressful since the consultant would not be familiar with the specific teaching context of her classroom.

> I think the consultant in January will be a lot more stressful, because I know [the principal] on a personal basis, and I know that he knows where the lesson has come from. Like it wasn't just me in September. The teacher that I'm with, with her 5 years' experience, was tearing her hair out. She said that this was the hardest class she's ever had to get together. There's just a clash of a lot of personalities in there. And then the combination of--we send in Language Arts, I think, eight to Resource Room, and seven or eight in math, so that's a large number of our class who are very weak. Then we have some very strong students, and we don't have a lot in the middle. So it makes it a very challenging class to teach. So he [the principal] knows that, whereas I feel like this consultant will step in, and she won't know where we've come from, she won't know our kids, and I'm just afraid that she won't look at it that way.

Tammy spoke highly of her principal, indicating that he was both caring and supportive. This was evident when, before the November interview began, he walked down to Tammy's classroom, introduced himself to the researcher,

and mentioned what a great job Tammy was doing. Tammy expressed appreciation of the way he was visible in the school and comfortable with her students.

> And he is the type of principal that will pop in and out. Sometimes you won't even notice. You'll see him walking out the door and you'll think "I wonder how long he's been there?" So that's good because then when he comes up and tells you things are going well, you feel good about it.

**Completion of the First Year of Teaching**

During the June interview Tammy, like the others, commented that the year had been a successful one, but that it had passed quickly.

> It's gone quickly, most of the time, except for maybe a spurt there in January where it seemed to last awhile, but other than that, it's gone quickly. And I think that the kids have changed a lot over the year and I'm pleased to say that I think I've had some input in seeing them change, so that's good.

When asked to identify a particularly rewarding experience, Tammy mentioned the Christmas concert that she had planned, organized, and conducted.

> Probably the Christmas Concert. That was a big high. That went just fine. And as the music teacher, and a new principal, so he really didn't know quite what to expect either. I know he was pleased and the parents were pleased, and it was just great. Yes, that was a high.

She also felt pride in the growth that some of her problem students had demonstrated.

> And probably last time we talked a lot about parents, and actually the

up's from those bad situations have been that we got a couple of kids through a lot and the parents seem to be happy, or at least satisfactorily happy, so they're not yanking their kids from the school or something like that. There were two that were kind of challenges. And the kids changed a lot too. One little boy in particular has just had a complete attitude change and he's not so defensive, so you think well either I won him over or maybe he matured a bit, so that was good.

Tammy had learned the importance of specificity in her instructions to students and also the importance of positive reinforcement.

Be really specific with your directions. Very specific, even if you have to go back and say them over and over again. I found that I can make things simpler and I can talk less. I've learned to talk less because they don't listen anyway. I think they listen to about the first fifty words you say and then they block you out, so I try and get the crunch right into those first fifty words. And that positive [reinforcement]--I don't know if I really believed that before. You know we get that at university to work on the positives, and I thought "Yeah, right; they are motivated if it's negative" but I find that it works better for the positive, and the negative sometimes has to be there. Like sometimes I do have to give detentions or I have to make them stay after school and do their work because there are kids that [could be offered] all the stickers in the world and they're still going to give you their work not completed. And they have to know that that's not acceptable. And I'm finding it a real struggle. Like right now, it's been half an hour since school let out and I'm still in there with kids finishing up even work from the morning. Like the morning teacher will come to me and say that these kids all have to do this, this, and that. So the book work of keeping everyone straight. But I find that you have to follow through on that.

One unanticipated occurrence of the first year had to do with Tammy's expectations of her students.

> I didn't expect perfectly bright, capable children to socialize the day away and hand me in nothing. That was a surprise, because I know that three or four of our kids that hand in very little work are very capable. I've seen them, and worked with them. They do hand in things every once in a while though, hand in things easily. But a lot of the times one little girl in particular will hand it in undone. I don't know if she's a little Einstein who just finds it irrelevant to write it down or whatever, but I know she's capable and she doesn't do it.

As a result of her first-year experiences, Tammy, too, had learned much about herself.

> I learned that I think I'm ultimately an optimist, because all this job stuff, I've said is stressful but I haven't ever really believed that I wouldn't go on or been really down about it. I've been able to kind of slide through. It's funny, because when my principal and other teachers say, "Oh you're such an optimist, and you always have a smile," I think oh brother, these people don't know. Don't ask my husband if I'm an optimist! But I think there's an optimistic side to me. And I must like what I do, because I'm really content here. Sometimes, I'm hard to get up in the morning, and sometimes it's hard to think of going to work on Sunday night, but I really like to be here.

Tammy had noticed the existence of school politics, something that was quite different from what she had expected.

> Oh, there are more school politics than I thought. I had been oblivious to this all year. I didn't have a clue. I was just with my blinders on, running from the workroom to my classroom to whatever. And just in the last couple of months with all these major changes, a lot of things have crept up. And actually now I have started to socialize with the teachers more outside of school. So we'll go for a golf game or something like that, and I'll hear things that are just more political than on the actual social level of things. . . . So that [the politics] has been more of a part of school than

I realized.

After working with her grade two class for the school year, Tammy offered some comments regarding the two-teacher arrangement and the effect of this arrangement on both teachers and students.

> But if they said I could have my choice of jobs I wouldn't choose to do this again--half in the morning, half in the afternoon--I feel like I can't be accountable. Like parents will come to me and they'll want to know about the reading. I don't know, I am one of their teachers and I don't even really know where they're at with their reading, because I'm not here for LA, and I can't be filled in at noon hour, as to how every kid is progressing. It's just not possible. . . . But the reality is if you can just keep on top of this kind of book work like who did what and did Joe bring it home, and did he bring it back? And behavior things. Like "I sent Luke to the office; did you bring him back?" "I sent Liz because she was sick; did you get her?" Just to get through that is amazing. You don't find out much about what happens to their academics in the morning. And so I think it's really hard for me to be accountable.
>
> Secondly I think the kids have had too many changes. Literally, out of 26 kids that we've ended up with now, 10 of them have qualified for funding. Two or three of them are behaviour disordered. I mean that is a really tough room. They need a lot of structure and they don't need a lot of change. And what they get is one teacher in the afternoon, one teacher in the morning, and a resource teacher yanking them out half the afternoon, half the morning. So there is too much going and coming in that room, so I wouldn't choose to do that again, but that's no one's fault. I don't think [the principal] realized that until November. I know [the other teacher] didn't realize it, and I certainly had no clue, because you just come in, you've never done this before. So it really wasn't the best all round. Maybe some kids could handle it, you know if you only had one or two who were funded. . . . But this assignment has been quite difficult in that respect.

Probably the most disappointing aspect of her first year of teaching had been the uncertainty of her employment situation, but Tammy was very appreciative of her principal's straightforwardness and honesty regarding this:

> My principal told us about the middle of January. He brought us in and told us it wasn't looking good. Actually, it was right after our first evaluation, and then he was supposed to fill out that yellow form for our continuous contract and he didn't end up filling that out until about April because he wasn't even sure if he was allowed to fill it out. And then he did that and we got recommended and then we found out from the superintendent that we weren't accepted.

and, like Terry, she had the sense that all of her hard work during the year had been futile:

> [I]t just felt so hopeless. Like all that work you were doing was meaningless. Because even if someone replaces you, they don't really come and pick up where you left off. What you have done is kind of abandoned and then they start all over again, which is OK but you kind of think well I did this so that--Handbells, for example. I took grade 4's and suffered with them in my choir because I wanted to have good 5's and 6's in the future. So those kinds of things, you think "Why am I doing this if no one's going to be here to take it on next year?"

but unlike Terry, Tammy was quite philosophical about the way things had turned out:

> I think at times it has felt in a sense like you were being fired or you weren't doing your job properly, but deep down I know that this is a rare occurence. The budget hasn't been this bad since 1930-something, so I try and keep that in mind. But I do feel for [our principal]. He's levelled with us and not tried to give us false hope, and it's happening all over the district. Even if they're not losing their jobs, they're losing their preferred jobs and they're having to go into their second or third choices. So it

> makes you realize that you're not being picked on or singled out. I would feel terrible, though, if there was anything I could do. That's why I said to [my principal] if there was anything I did this year, like if it was because I wasn't doing my assessments satisfactorily, or because I wasn't instructing properly or whatever, it would give you something to work on. You could read up on it and you could--But the way it was, there was nothing you could do so you felt kind of helpless. If you could come up with 14 million dollars for the school board!

and still, in spite of everything, she wanted to remain a teacher.

> Just because I feel like I have to work, I would go elsewhere, like I would go to a bank or whatever, if I had to go back and work part time. But it's not my preference. I'd really like to be here. Especially with, I feel, the resources that I've got even for music will make it easier for next year, so I won't have to start from scratch on everything. However, I don't think it will be easy, because I have a lot of refining to do. I think every unit I've done, I'll have to still go back and improve it, but it's easier to improve something than to create it.

Since Tammy's husband had a permanent job in the city, she was going to have to confine her job search to the city and surrounding area. "My husband has a job here so I'm not going to go off to another district or anything like that. So I will stay here, and if anything, I would try and sub or whatever." Thus Tammy's successful first year, like the years of the other beginning teachers in the study, had ended without the reward of a continuous teaching contract.

**Commentary on Tammy's Story**

Evident throughout Tammy's story was mention of the extensive support she had received from so many people. The strong emotional support from her

husband and mother together with the practical support she had received from her mother-in-law, also a teacher, had been invaluable. She had also received valuable support and assistance from her school district, having spent the last week of her summer attending district-sponsored inservices designed specifically for new teachers, and was pleased when the new-teacher consultant continued the sessions in the form of a support group which met regularly throughout the school year. The district music consultant had visited Tammy's classroom, had sent Tammy various materials and had made a point of calling her whenever there was an inservice that she thought might be of interest to Tammy.

At the school level, Tammy had formed friendships with other teachers on staff, having bonded closely with the other beginning teacher and the teacher with whom she shared her class. She also mentioned that her principal, a man who saw his school staff as a family and took the concerns of his staff very seriously, had offered her outstanding support. This was shown by his high visibility in the school, his many informal visits to Tammy's classroom, their numerous informal chats, and by the immediate, honest, and straightforward way in which he informed Tammy that she would not have a contract the following year.

Tammy expressed some concerns about her preservice training. She, too, would have preferred more practical courses, as indicated by her comment about completing elementary music training and never having taken anything about handbells. When speaking of her practicum, she mentioned that because her cooperating teachers had chosen to team teach with her, she had not felt overly confident about classroom management and identified this as a specific skill on which she wanted to continue working for the remainder of her first year.

Although she had been a bit surprised by the power the parents in her community seemed to possess, Tammy had gained confidence through her

effective dealings with them, as evidenced by her successful solution to the problem with the boy who had refused to do his work. She had also been surprised by the existence of school politics.

Although Tammy had begun the year by working until 6 o'clock every night as well as working at the school every weekend, as the year progressed, she had found what she felt was a better balance between her professional and personal lives. Yet many Saturdays were still spent cutting out letters, stapling booklets, and telephoning parents. Tammy was also surprised at the number of tasks she had to perform that were not directly related to teaching, such as collecting money for Troll book orders, cookie funds, and school lunches.

However, for Tammy, the positive relationships she had formed with colleagues, students, and parents, together with the growth demonstrated by her very challenging class, had made her year both valuable and rewarding.

## CHAPTER 5

## PROFILE OF BRAD

Brad's story has been placed by itself in this chapter. Because he joined the study in October and was not interviewed until the beginning of December, his discussion of expectations of his first year of teaching is his memory of how he felt in August. Besides being the only male teacher in the study, Brad was also the only high school teacher and his generally part time teaching assignment in English language arts fluctuated throughout the year.

### Brad's Story

Twenty-nine years old during his first year of teaching, Brad described himself as an outgoing person with a good sense of humour who enjoyed new situations and learning new things. The elder of two sons, he remembered his childhood as having been happy. One experience that stood out in his mind was when, at age ten, Brad and his family moved from the city to an area just west of the city. The city community where the family had been living was an older one, whereas the suburb was much newer, and Brad commented that the move required "a bit of an adjustment moving to a slightly larger school and a newer community . . . and the kids were a little bit different out in [the suburbs], so that took some adjusting."

School experiences, as described by Brad, were mainly pleasant ones but he, in retrospect, felt that he had not worked up to his full academic potential.

> And I think part of that [mediocre academic achievement] came from just not seeing any rewards for working hard. And at some point in time I made the decision "Gee why should I work hard for A's when I can slough

> off and get B's?" And as I got older and the material got more difficult, the B's started turning into C's, and it just carried on that way. And it wasn't until I got into university that I changed that around.

Upon graduation from high school, Brad worked at blue collar jobs for a few years before discovering that he didn't want to spend his life in "lumber yards watching [his] life go by in board-feet per minute." This experience brought about the decision to attend university, and he named his parents as important influences in this as well as other major life decisions. The specific decision to become a teacher, however, had been influenced by his girlfriend, now his wife, since she was already a teacher.

**Preparation for Teaching**

Brad reported that, in terms of academic achievement, he had been an average university student.

> I wouldn't say that I was an exceptionally high achiever, but I got my fair share of 8's and 9's. In the Faculty of Education, I don't know what a high achiever or low achiever is. Sometimes you get a sense that a high achiever is just the person who's best at kissing the professor's butt, you know? So I guess I was an average achiever in the Faculty of Education.

Brad's first practicum experience consisted of a four week placement in a junior high school in a smaller community north of the city.

> I think in some respects the student teaching I did out in [the small community] was interesting in that it showed me a few things I wouldn't want to do in my classroom. Classroom management techniques out there were not particularly great in that particular classroom I was in. It seemed to me that a lot of the teaching they were doing was very route-

> oriented and basic recall. In terms of Bloom's Taxonomy, it was not very sophisticated. So I decided I would want to be a little more sophisticated than that in my own teaching.

He indicated that his second experience, an eight week placement in a city high school was the more valuable one.

> The fact that after a couple of weeks I was alone in the classroom . . . made it feel that it was my class. That was helpful because when I walked into my classes this year I already knew what it was like to walk into a classroom and not have somebody there holding my hand and making sure things would go right for me. I knew that I had to do it on my own.

Although he expressed a need for more feedback from both cooperating teachers in terms of his general teaching performance, Brad felt that, overall, student teaching had prepared him for the act of teaching, but not for the long term planning of units.

> The only other point, though, would be that in both my student teaching experiences, a little more feedback would have been helpful in making me decide how well I was doing. I think they have prepared me fairly well in terms of the initial business of teaching. They have prepared me less well in terms of planning and the long term aspect because you're only teaching one unit. You're not planning the whole year.

When discussing courses offered in the Faculty of Education, Brad mentioned specific courses which he had found to be valuable.

> I took a course on Issues in Education which was a good course because it helped us explore some of the things that we would be having to deal with--censorship, sex in the classroom, child abuse--stuff that we would have to deal with, and it wasn't done in the [educational administration] sense. It was done in a very real "let's talk about this and think about it"

way. It was a helpful class. The [required educational administration course], surprisingly, was very helpful for me. And some of the other psych courses--the basic psychology was helpful in some respects, if anything, just in terms of classroom management and behavioural psychology and things like that.

When reflecting on the university in general, however, Brad felt that there were some changes that needed to be made in that some instructors were misleading students about the reality of teaching.

> All in all, I guess I would say that in terms of the faculty at the university, it seems to me that there is some deadwood over there too that should be cut out. And that there is an ivory tower mentality that once you get into real teaching doesn't work. I mean there should be this ideal that we shoot for, but sometimes the instructors over there don't tell you that you are not going to hit that ideal all the time. And how do you deal with it when in your classroom you can't meet this ideal, when the lessons don't pan out the way you think they should?

**Remembered Expectations of Teaching**

Since his wife was teaching in a city elementary school, Brad, in his job search, had been restricted to applying to school districts in the city and surrounding commutable areas. He discussed the anxiety he had experienced during the four months following university convocation, wondering if he would be hired. Then, when he was hired just two days before classes started, he had experienced a whole new set of worries, and had approached with trepidation his first teaching assignment, half-time senior high English in a very wealthy area of the city. "You know I land my first job and it's at this school which is one of the top high schools in the city and that puts a pile of pressure on."

He had wondered if he would be good enough, and if he had what it would

take to be a competent teacher.

> I did not know if I was qualified. I came out of university with this piece of paper that says you're a teacher, but it's a long way between that piece of paper and actually doing it day in day out. And doing all the prep work--even the practicums don't provide a realistic sense of what you're going to have to do. So I guess I was happy that I had gotten a position but I was still quite terrified, and not quite sure whether I wanted to be a teacher yet.

Despite his initial feelings of apprehension, Brad had been confident that he would be able to do the job since he had been successful in both of his practicum experiences.

> I had done pretty much as well as I could in the time frame given. So I felt that I could do the job and I said to my wife, I've done a bunch of other different jobs and I've always done well at those and there's no reason I can't do well on this one, too. So that was what I was confident about--that I could do the job given the time to learn.

He had also been confident that he would have something of value to offer his students.

> I guess I've brought in a variety of life experience. I've been to university, I've worked in blue collar jobs, I've travelled some, my friends have ranged from people who haven't finished their grade 12 to university professors. That allows me to get down on the level of some of the kids I'm teaching. What I hope I can do for them is just make them see that "Look, school's important, and I found out the hard way because I didn't take it seriously when I was in high school."

**Realities of Teaching**

Brad's teaching assignment had changed from month to month as a result of the staffing needs at the high school where he was teaching. At the time of the

early December interview, his assignment was three classes of English 10 and one class of English 13. When he had first spoken of his strength as a teacher, Brad had mentioned that he thought he had the ability to make his students feel comfortable, and that students usually liked him. By December, though, he was able to see both positive and negative aspects of this particular strength.

> I mean, here [at this school] I guess one of the important things is that the kids like you. I've had people say to me, "If the kids like you, you'll do OK." And at times I feel like oh good, the kids like me; I'll do OK, but am I teaching them anything? Should kids like their teacher? But the kids do like me and it makes it easier for me to criticize, for instance, their writing. They start to recognize that I'm criticizing their writing; I'm not criticizing them. And they seem to be willing to approach me for help, which I like.

Brad also mentioned that another strength was his ability to adjust his lessons appropriately if they were not going the way he thought they should.

> I know when a lesson is going wrong, and when it should be going better, and I can make strategies, or correct it next time around. Because I have three classes of English 10, it's helpful too. I teach them the same thing and after three lessons, usually the lesson works pretty smoothly. So I guess the ability to reflect and revise would be what I consider a strength.

A weakness identified by Brad was his lack of familiarity with the senior high English curriculum.

> I mean I've got six years of university under my belt and I've got an English degree and I walk into this room with all these books around here and I would say that 90% of them I have never read. There's nothing in common between university curriculum and high school curriculum. Most of the [books] I have read I haven't read since high school. So in terms of knowledge of the material, even in terms of terminology--. You were talking the other day about poetry; I don't

> remember what those terms mean any more. So, in terms of things like that I feel I've got to at least brush up on an awful lot of it. I feel like I'm just one step ahead of the kids most of the time.

He was also struggling to find the balance between his own accountability for report card marks and his students' responsibility for their own learning.

> My other weakness I would say is just in terms of pedagogy and you can tie that in with confidence. I have been, but I'm getting over it, reluctant to take chances in my classes. It's easy to do the didactic, talk-down stuff: "I'm teacher, you're student; I tell you what you have to know, you write it down and regurgitate it back to me on an exam." It's more of a chance to say, "This is a project we're doing. Take it and run with it, kids. "And then you gotta say, "I wonder if they will learn this stuff?" You give them that exam at the end of the unit and they don't know it, it's like "oh" and then you're accountable. I've gotta have marks for them. How do I deal with this? So I'm a little more confident that the kids will learn it on their own. But that's a weakness, the tendency to do the didactic route because you know that they're getting the stuff, or at least you covered it.

One third of the way through his first year of teaching, Brad was noticing a very large difference between his expectation of his first year and the reality he was experiencing. He had felt very well prepared in terms of classroom management: "I wasn't really concerned about walking into a class and losing complete control or anything like that. I feel relatively comfortable in the classroom. I was prepared to be a teacher in that respect." However, Brad was not prepared for the workload: "I didn't think it would be so all encompassing."

An irritant for Brad was the number of procedural rules and regulations associated with the running of a large high school.

> All the red tape that we have here with photocopy systems. I figured that [you] go in the morning, you need something run off, you run it off and take

> it to class. Here it's a three-day process. You have to fill out the forms and send it away and make sure there's enough time for the photocopy person. And if they don't like the way you've sent your masters in they send them back to you, or you come in to pick it up and they yell at you. So that I wasn't prepared for the red tape

Lack of control over his time outside of the classroom was a further frustration for Brad:

> I'm finding that I don't have as much control as I thought I would have. You have certain plans for a prep or after school and the day before you've gone to do this you get a note in your mailbox saying "Staff meeting tomorrow: be there.". . . It seems to me that there are more demands made on me than at times that I feel willing to carry through with.

He also expressed surprise at the vast difference between other jobs he had worked at and teaching.

> This summer I was working at this chemical plant doing work with computers, technical writing, wonderful, interesting work and I looked at [the large salary] I was getting paid and knew that I could leave every night after work and not have to think about work. And teaching is not like that. You take it home with you. Even if you don't take the marking home with you, you take home all the problems.

One rather depressing realization for Brad was that there were some students on whom he would have no effect.

> Because you walk in thinking well, I'm a younger teacher and I can reach these kids and there are just some kids that I can't reach. They don't give a rip [about] what I have to say and it doesn't matter whether I'm nice to them or whether I come down hard on them; they just don't care. They've come in with so much baggage from home or from wherever that I don't

> mean anything to them. This is just "I'm here because I have to be" or "It's better than jail" in some cases. And that's somewhat disappointing to think that there are some kids that you feel like you really can't do much for them.

Paradoxically, Brad unhesitatingly identified his students as being the best thing that had happened to him thus far in the school year. He was particularly pleased about some students' willingness to assume ownership of their own learning, a real change from the beginning of the year.

> So far this year--and it's just started now--I'm starting to find that there's less stress on me because I'm starting to let kids do a little more of the learning on their own, so I've given them projects to do and it's been wonderful this past week to go into the library and these kids are doing these projects and they're just going for it. They're eating this stuff up and they're digging for the books and I just have to answer a few questions here and there. They're really interested in this mythology unit we're doing. So it takes some pressure off me in terms of I don't feel like I have to teach them every minute of the day. They can learn some stuff on their own. And it also is just plain nice to see them doing that, and I enjoy that--seeing that they are eager to learn.

Parent-teacher interviews had been a bit of a surprise for Brad in that they were a pleasant experience.

> I thought I was going to sit in this desk and people were going to yell at me for three hours! And in fact, most of the parents were supportive and the comments were positive--"so-and-so really likes your English class."

One-third of the way through his first year of teaching, the most unpleasant experience for Brad had been the constant changing of his teaching assignment.

> For me it's been the "You're a half time teacher, you're a full time teacher, now you're a half time teacher, now you're a full time teacher again" because I've been bumped up and bumped down. Somebody leaves and it looks like they may be gone for the year so they give me this person's courses, and so I inherit two 20 classes and a 13, and I've been teaching all 10's. That means that it's like September all over again. I've got to develop a rapport with the kids, I've got to start planning for 20's. The week that this stuff happens to me, I have to immediately come up with enough assignments for that week, and then a week later I find out that this person's coming back, so I'm back down to three classes again. And then the week after that they suggest "I've got this person going out doing home schooling. Would you like this person's afternoon classes?" And of course, being an eager teacher and wanting a position here, I say yes. But again, it's like September all over again. But with those classes it was different because I had one class of 10's so I could use some of the materials I'd been using before. But it's still developing rapport, and it's even worse because you're a new teacher coming in after another teacher and they [students] have certain expectations that they've had to live up to with one teacher and your expectations are different, and it's a hard transition for them, and because it's hard for them, it's hard for you.

Like the others, Brad saw himself as a part of his individual school rather than part of the district. Although he had kept to himself quite a bit, he had become aware of the politics within the school.

> At this point in time I haven't had that much contact with people from the district, but in terms of the school, I'm just keeping my head down. I keep my nose in my classroom, close the door, and concentrate on teaching. It seems that in a school, especially a school this size, there's a fair bit of politics, and there's a little bit of backbiting here and there, and I just try to stay clear of it. And people come up to me and I'll listen, but I try not to make any comments one way or the other. I'm just interested in doing the best job that I can for the kids that I'm teaching, and hopefully that'll translate into some kind of permanent position.

He had, however, made use of teaching materials offered by English department colleagues and had formed an informal support group with two experienced teachers who were new to teaching high school English.

> We can sit around and we can whine and complain and blow off steam, and rail at the system, and it's easier to come in and sit down and have a bull session like this and just get all the stress out, rather than go down to the office and do it at an administrator, and get fired! It's better to sit back and just blow off that steam and then think about things in a more rational fashion. So that support has been important. In terms of teaching materials and things like that, people in this department are pretty good about giving you stuff if you need it, but it still comes down to adapting it for your own use. But at least it gives you some basis to start off with.

He had not, as yet, been able to make use of any formal district support and expressed a definite need for assistance with student evaluation.

> I was supposed to go to one [inservice] on computerized marking, but I inherited these classes, so it was cancel that, I've got planning to do! And that's what I've found is that I get caught up in planning and things like that and if the inservices are run in the afternoon, I'm not far enough ahead of the game that I want to bring in a sub to take my classes because sometimes I'm sitting up the night before figuring out what I'm going to do the next day. So I've been reluctant to do that, but I definitely have the desire to take some inservices, one on evaluation, for one thing. How do you evaluate kids? How does my evaluation compare to somebody else's, especially in English where it seems to be so subjective.

Brad, like the others, indicated the way in which teaching was consuming his life.

> I've got this pile of marking, and it seems that I don't get any marking done at school. I've got a prep--two preps in a row--I'll get some

> marking done--I can't find a quiet place, or I'll get caught up talking to a kid, or if I do have a quiet place, other teachers come in and start talking and you end up talking to them and time gets wasted. So I plan to mark at home, and I go home and the phone rings and I'm on the phone with my mother. And this week I caught a cold of some kind and for two days I was going to school but I'd come home at night and I was just wiped out. I was planning on doing marking. All I did was sleep. And then there are some times when the stress just gets to you and a friend calls up: "Do you want to go out?" "Yeah. Let's go out." And I guess I think that's important because I try to maintain some sort of balance in my life. I don't want to get sick, and if you spend all your time working on school--*and you can !*--you find you get sick.

When pressed to identify the greatest difference between his expectation and the actual reality of his first year of teaching, Brad mentioned the enormity of the commitment, in terms of both time and sheer emotion.

> I didn't expect to be putting in the 16-hour days that I'm putting in. I did not expect that I would go home at night and not be able to sleep because I was thinking of school. . . . I was getting four hours of sleep a night because I'd be lying there thinking about lesson plans, or what I was going to do with this kid who was not responsive. I wasn't prepared for that kind of stress. I wasn't prepared to be eaten up by my job because I've never had a job before that has been this all-encompassing.

**Completion of the First Year of Teaching**

When discussing his year during the June interview, Brad felt that it had been a successful first year of teaching.

> I think my year has gone fairly well. I'm here, and I still have a job for at least another couple of weeks and my evaluations have been good and I feel that I've survived, given how I was kind of thrown into it at the last minute. I can't complain. I think the year has gone quite well.

He was pleased with his extracurricular involvement on the awards committee. "We had an awards night the other night and I was the reader for the grade 10 awards and that was kind of fun. I enjoyed that."

When asked to identify a particularly negative experience from his first year, Brad mentioned a very stressful encounter with a student and her parents over the grading of an essay.

> I had a problem with some parents regarding a paper that I had marked, and in retrospect I hadn't thought about the mark I had given this girl on the paper and I realized that I really came down too hard on her. The mark was unfair. I was trying to send a message about her general effort and attitude through this paper. So I called the parents and apologized profusely, but they were looking for something a little bit more like my entrails spilled out on the floor and lit on fire! So they had all of her work for the year reevaluated, and that was fine. I considered that to be a fair request on their part if they had a concern that my marking was off. And that was done, and my marking was found to be reflective of her efforts and the expectations that we have in the school. Nonetheless they just wouldn't let it drop, and we had a meeting with the principal and the head of the department, and I was not the only teacher in school that they had problems with. But it was an extremely unpleasant situation, and for a few weeks there I just was saying to myself, "Gee, do I really need this?" and "Do I want to do this for a living--argue with parents over their daughter's effort and carry the responsibility for a kid who is simply not putting in enough effort?" But whenever I run into a situation like that I try to take a step backward and say "Okay, it will be over in a couple of weeks and things will look better." But it was a very stressful time.

Brad went on to explain that, after consultation with the principal and the English department head, the student was moved out of his class and into another English class.

> I said she was welcome to stay, that I didn't hold a grudge against her

> personally, but if she wanted to move out of the class that was an option as well. This was with a month remaining in the year. So she did, into another teacher's class who I think in some respects is much more strict and has higher expectations than I do, so she may have gone out of the frying pan into the fire.

When reflecting on what he had learned about teaching during his first year, Brad remarked that, from this one negative encounter with parents, he had gained something of value.

> I've learned that for myself I have to make sure that I transmit my objectives for assignments to the kids more clearly, that I have the objectives for the assignment more clearly laid out for myself before I hand it out to them. And that's a problem that stemmed from, I think, always being a little bit behind the eight-ball, having started [teaching] the day before classes started. I've just been playing catch-up for a lot of the year. So you're generating assignments without really thinking about "How am I going to mark this? What am I really looking for?" So that was one thing that I learned, that I have to be clearer both in setting the objectives for myself and for my students.

During the year Brad had also gained some long term survival skills.

> I guess I've learned that, as one of my other colleagues said, you live from holiday to holiday. The only way to survive the year is to accept the fact that you have to break it up into pieces. I've survived till the next holiday and I can relax a bit--and try and break it up into chunks because if you look at it as a whole year, it seems a little bit overwhelming; it seems a long way to go.

In addition, he had gained some political survival skills.

> I've learned, I think, to be careful of some of the political landmines that you can step on in a school. I haven't stepped on any, really, this year,

> but I've seen other colleagues that have and it's created a lot of stress for them. So, choose your battles well, and ask yourself, "Do you really want to fight over this? Is it worth it?"

Brad also noted that he had learned to manage his time better, despite all of the distractions in a crowded school.

> It's hard to work at the school because there's no work space, but it's just a matter of you have to be resourceful and you have to find yourself some little quiet space to do your work. Otherwise it just won't get done and you'll find you are doing it at home at night when you really should be trying to relax a little bit.

Brad also mentioned that he had learned much in terms of his own knowledge base for English.

> A lot of it I knew before, but it's a matter of relearning it. I mean I never had much call to know what metonymy was in university. So now, teaching poetry, I had to review all that stuff. So that's an aspect too, just relearning and learning new things so that you can pass them on to your students.

When discussing what had been different from what he had expected of his first year Brad, like Tammy, responded that he had not expected that there would be so many politics in teaching. He also remarked on how isolated he had felt: "I expected a little more collegiality, I think. I didn't expect to be on my own quite so much." Further, he expressed surprise and concern that he had only been evaluated once all year.

> People keep telling me what a wonderful job I'm doing as a teacher, and I've only had one person in my classroom to evaluate me. [This person was] in for 20 minutes, and I wonder, well, how [does he] know? I

> could be dancing naked on my desktop in front of my students, and if none of [my students] said anything, nobody would know! So I expected that people would be in more to see what I'm doing, maybe working with me a little bit--to try and take this tack on this--and I haven't found it to be like that. I've found it to be much more of you go in your classroom, you do your thing, and unless the administrators or your department head hear something really horrible about you, you're considered to be doing OK. And in some respects I think that this whole parent thing arose to some degree out of a problem perhaps with my objectives not being clear, and it would have been nice if somebody had tapped me on the shoulder toward the beginning of the year and said, "You know, this is a good assignment but your objectives aren't that clear for the kids." That, I think, would be the biggest thing. Just that I thought that there would be a little more collegiality and that I'd be monitored a little bit more, that I wouldn't feel quite so much like I'd been thrown in water and somebody had said "swim."

Like Sabine and Tammy, Brad had discovered the intrinsic rewards of teaching, almost in spite of himself.

> But I wasn't entirely sure I wanted to be a teacher, and this year there are times when you see the light go on in a kid's head after they've had a real problem with some topic, and you have them in a tutorial and you see "Oh yeah, I get this!" and the kids come to you and ask intelligent questions and you can see that they're asking because of something you did in class. That is really uplifting, and I guess I didn't see myself as a person who would get that much joy out of that. Yeah, these kids--I'm teaching them something. They're learning something. This is good. I get a sense of satisfaction from that, and I wasn't sure that I would be getting that, that maybe I would be just--well this is a job. So there are some rewards I think that I've gotten from it that I didn't think I would get.

Brad was unsure of his plans for the following year and, although he preferred to teach, was considering all employment options, not just those within

the teaching profession.

> I have no contract; I was on a temporary contract this year, so although everybody seems to be pleased with my performance, nobody can offer me anything. So, I'm kind of in limbo, and I'm in limbo not only in terms of getting on back here, but at getting on at any school. So, over the course of the summer, I'm going to also look at other options, simply because I don't know what's going to happen in September and, as much as I like teaching, I have to recognize that I need money and I don't know if I can live on a sub's salary, so I may have to look at getting into something different. And that's not to say that I'll never get back into teaching if I do, but there's always that possibility too that I may end up just choosing an entirely different career course.

He had realized that, given the school board's economic situation, there probably would not be a job for him the following year, and was quite philosophical about it.

> I knew that my position was tenuous anyhow because, as a temporary position, I could have been out of a job any time this year. My contract was one of these warranty contracts [ending] February 2nd or the return of such-and-such a teacher, whichever comes first. So if the teacher whom I have been replacing had decided that she felt fit enough to teach full time, I would have been out of a job. So I knew that was a possibility and I didn't really expect necessarily to get a position here the following year, but I felt that [in doing] a reasonable job I could have worked my way in somewhere, and that's still a possibility I suppose, but it's a much more remote possibility now.

Yet despite his philosophical attitude about his situation, Brad still felt frustrated by the fact that there were no jobs for beginning teachers.

> There are times when I sit down and I look through the career section of the newspaper and I see a graphic artist or a technical writer and I think "I

> could do that [instead of teaching]"--and I feel angry sometimes. I feel like saying, "Look, I've got the skills, I've spent the six years at university, I've proven that I can do the job, so give me the job or I'll take my skills and my knowledge and go somewhere else and use it." I don't feel any animosity towards the administration of the school, and I understand the school board . . . have their problems too, and budget concerns are one of them. I guess one of the things that we've discussed in the staff room is the fact that there is some deadweight in the system too--some teachers that have been around for a long time and could be moving along if there was some sort of early retirement package to make room for people coming up. You hear about teachers that are kind of going through the motions or really people who shouldn't be in the classroom, or are just burned out, and you think, "Well gee, I could do it. I could go in there and take over. I could put that energy in." That's where you find yourself getting a little bit angry.

He was, however, appreciative of the fact that he had been given the opportunity to teach at all and, when asked if he wanted to add anything to his story, responded, "I just hope it has a happy ending. The prince rides off into the sunset with a teaching job next year!"

**Commentary on Brad's Story**

A common theme to Brad's story seemed to be his awareness of the marked contrast between theory and practice, as indicated by his comments about the lack of similarity between the many university English courses he had taken and the high school English courses he was teaching. This disparity between theory and practice was further shown through his perception that students were being deceived when, through their university course work, they were being led to believe that the ideal of students sitting on the edge of their seats, hanging on the teacher's every word was what would happen in every

classroom every day. His daily encounters with students who were not interested in what Brad had to offer them through either his life experiences or his classroom instruction certainly reinforced this contrast.

Although Brad described his practicum experiences as having been generally positive, he indicated that he would have liked more assistance in long term planning. He also expressed a need for more specific feedback from both of his cooperating teachers in terms of his teaching performance, a concern which had extended to his first year of teaching as he wondered how it was that his superiors had become aware of the good job he was doing when, during the whole school year, only one person had observed his class for twenty minutes.

Brad had discovered the importance of being flexible within the classroom situation and had felt fortunate that, because he was teaching three classes of English 10, he had been able to adapt his lesson if necessary. He had been surprised at the way in which demands on his time outside of the classroom (staff meetings, English department meetings, conferences with individual students and conversations with colleagues) ate into his marking time and had constantly felt that he was falling behind.

As the year progressed and Brad gained confidence, he began to take more risks, shifting from teacher-centred to student-centred activities in his classes. He had struggled to find the balance between his accountability for the evaluation of his students and their responsibility for their own learning. Through his implementation of more student-centred activities, he found that the more accountable he made his students for their own learning, the more responsible they became.

Brad had not expected teaching to consume his life as extensively as it had. Although he had worked at many different jobs before entering teaching, he had not imagined that he would be working 16-hour days or waking up in the

middle of the night worrying about school. Yet he had also discovered the instrinsic rewards of working with young people, as shown by his students' enthusiastic involvement in the mythology unit.

Although the majority of Brad's experiences with parents had been positive ones, as in the parent teacher interviews, a single negative experience, though stressful, had caused Brad to rethink some aspects of his program. The unpleasant incident with the parents who were unhappy with Brad's evaluation of their daughter's work caused him to reexamine the manner in which he was communicating requirements of assignments to his students and how he was evaluating their work.

Although Brad had been surprised at the scarcity of collegial relationships among staff members at his school, he had been fortunate to have formed an informal support network with other teachers who were new to the school. The size of the school and the hierarchical division of the staff by department had made this small support group necessary for Brad's political survival. Venting frustrations in the small group had helped him avoid some of the "political landmines" he saw other colleagues encounter. The fact that school politics existed at all had been a bit of a surprise to Brad.

Despite the constant fluctuation of his teaching assignment and the resulting repercussions in terms of planning and organizing for instruction with little more than a day's notice on some occasions, Brad felt that he had experienced a very successful first year of teaching.

# CHAPTER 6

# THEMES, IMPRESSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into the themes that emerged through analysis of the five beginning teachers' stories and the impressions of the researcher regarding these themes. Recommendations and implications for practice are given, and the chapter ends with a concluding statement. The page reference at the end of each teacher's.comments refers to the page in the thesis where that particular comment first appeared.

## Power

One theme that is evident across several of the stories is that of power. Obvious in all five beginning teachers' stories was the power possessed by two groups, principals and parents, and its subsequent effect on teachers in situations in which they were either powerless or empowered.

### Power of the Principal

It is important to distinguish between the two types of power employed by the principals of these beginning teachers. Two of the elementary school principals appeared to define their power as leadership which "is exercised when persons with certain purposes mobilize, in competition or in conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers" (Burns, 1978, p. 18). In contrast, the other two elementary school principals seemed to understand and employ their power as position power which "provides the incumbent with at least the potential of forcible domination and coercion" (Owens, 1991, p. 162).

Both Sabine's and Tammy's principals appeared to exercise their power as leadership. It seemed that these two principals believed in shared power and saw their schools as communities of valued individuals. Sabine mentioned the ongoing support and assistance she had received from her principal and from other teachers on staff, and Tammy stated that her principal saw his school staff as a family. "[I]f you have a worry it's his worry. So I've felt like it's more of a family situation here . . ." (p. 78).

Both teachers had been most appreciative of the way in which their principals shared information freely about the status of their contracts, and when it became clear that they would not be granted continuous contracts for the following year, both women spoke admiringly of the humane, sensitive, and immediate way in which this news was given to them. Thus, even though they knew that there would be no job for them the following year, they still felt that they had made valuable contributions at their respective schools, and that they had been valued as individuals by their principals for the work they had done. Their principals had dealt with the contract problem by exercising leadership in these situations.

Terry's principal, conversely, seemed to interpret his power as position power. Abuse of such power was shown near the end of Terry's first year of teaching in the offhand way in which her principal indicated that he had misinformed her about the status of her contract.

> [At the beginning of the year my principal] said that it doesn't matter if you're half time or full time or whatever, you could still get a continuous contract. He told me that up until about a month ago. He said, "Oh, I lied to you. You have to work a full year to get a continuous contract."

Similar abuse of this power was evident in the unfeeling way in which Terry's

principal finally got around to telling her that she would not have a job the following year.

> [H]e said "I have good news and bad news." So I said "Well, what is it?" and he said "Well, I don't have to post your job." I thought "Oh, great! That's good news!" and then he said "Because there's someone in the school that wants your job" (p. 50).

Witholding of crucial information was a method used by two principals to exercise power of position over their beginning teachers. Since she had not been informed by her principal, Terry had no idea that there would not be a teaching contract for her the following year. Her first inkling of this came through a newspaper article in the local paper and then, during a telephone conversation about an unrelated topic, her principal informed her, in passing, that he would be advertising her job to other teachers on contract with the district. He continued to withold important information from Terry regarding her contract status and only informed her that her position had been filled after Terry questioned him as to what was happening in terms of her job.

Similarly, Nancy's principal knew that there would be no contract for Nancy and witheld that information from her, even though Nancy had asked to be informed the moment her principal received the news. She had been told by her principal that they would have news about her contract by the end of March. However, when the end of March arrived, her principal told her that it would be another month before anything definite was known. Finally, at a central office meeting near the end of April, her principal was informed that Nancy would not be granted a continuous contract, yet she did not reveal this information to Nancy until the following day, even though Nancy had requested that her principal call her at home as soon as this information was released. Her principal chose not to

make this call and instead, the following morning at 11:20, interrupted Nancy's class and directed Nancy to come to her office at the end of the school day.

> So I knew. I didn't even ask "Does that mean I didn't get it?" I just said "Yeah, I'll see you at 3:30." Kind of like I don't even need to ask. I know what the answer is here. And at 3:30 I went to her office and she said she's done everything she can but there is no job; there's no contract for me (p. 69).

It does seem that the principal could have given Nancy the news regarding her contract status earlier, as Nancy had requested, and it certainly seems inappropriate for her principal to have interrupted Nancy's class only to summon Nancy to her office, not at lunch time, but at the end of the school day!

To this researcher, such seemingly callous disregard for the feelings of staff members is appalling, especially when it comes from persons appointed to positions of leadership and trust. By witholding contract information from Terry and Nancy, their principals had employed power of position, thereby rendering the women powerless and making the fact that they did not receive continuing contracts even harder to bear. In addition, abdication of position power was shown by Nancy's principal when she expected Nancy to defend the combined grouping decision *by herself* to the group of angry parents at a social evening during which Nancy's students were present. It does seem reasonable to expect that Nancy's principal should have been at this meeting in order to explain to parents a decision she had made before Nancy was hired.

One final observation involves the extent to which all five teachers in the study seemed to accept and conform to the status quo. This same tendency was obvious in participants in MacKinnon's (1989) study where student teachers found themselves conforming to the more traditional teacher-centred "practices and expectations of their cooperating teachers" (p. 2) because "all of them were

being evaluated by their cooperating teachers" (p. 12) even though they had entered their eight-week practicum experience with more liberal student-centred ideas gained from their teacher preparation courses. This same conformity to the status quo was displayed by the beginning teachers in this study as indicated through Nancy's observation that "[teachers are] a very accepting bunch . . . [who] take on more than [they] need to. . . . being so accepting of things, of heaping on the responsibilities of having the 12-hour days" (p. 66). Although such passive acceptance is understandable given that these teachers all wished to be rehired the following year, it was still surprising to this researcher that, for example, Brad did not indicate to his administration the amount of stress his constantly changing teaching assignment had caused him, or that Terry would comment that she "had the most wonderful principal anyone could ever ask for" (p. 51), even though he had misinformed her about her eligibility for a continuous teaching contract. The passive behaviour of these five beginning teachers together with the compliant behaviour of the student teachers in MacKinnon's study would seem to demonstrate the powerlessness of teachers in such situations.

**Power of Parents**

Another aspect of the power issue involves the power, both positive and negative, possessed by parents. It was interesting to note that when parents complained, schools were quick to react. This was shown in Brad's case with the parents who were unhappy about the mark their daughter had received on an English assignment. Yet Brad's first indication of parental dissatisfaction with his marking standards had come, not in September, after the first assignment had been marked, but in the month of June at the conclusion of a ten-month course. To this researcher, it seems that the administration of the school overreacted.

> So they had all of [the student's] work for the year reevaluated, and that was fine. I considered that to be a fair request on their part if they had a concern that my marking was off. And that was done, and my marking was found to be reflective of her efforts and the expectations that we have in the school. Nonetheless they just wouldn't let it drop, and we had a meeting with the principal and the head of the department, and I was not the only teacher in the school that they had problems with. But it was an extremely unpleasant situation . . . (p.104).

Nancy's experience with parents over the combined grouping issue also served to reinforce this theme. At the beginning of the year she had found it very intimidating to have parents interrupt her class and demand answers as to why their children had been placed in a split grade. However, by the end of the year, through involving parents extensively in her program and allowing them to experience first-hand the realities of a combined grouping classroom, Nancy had managed to change these negative attitudes.

> Two parents[of grade two children] who at the beginning of the year were marginally upset about their children being in a combined group said "I would really like so-and-so to stay with you next year in grade three" (p. 68).

Thus it was especially difficult for her when, after working so hard to successfully "sell" the philosophy of combined groupings to the parents of her students, Nancy's principal undermined this victory by promising parents that their children would not have to be in split grades two years in a row. "[The] principal has said that there was so much parent backlash about [the combined grouping issue] that if [students] are in it this year, [they] won't be in it next year" (p. 68). Here again, it would seem that decisions were being made hastily in response to negative parental pressure.

Tammy expressed a similar concern when she indicated her surprise at the amount of power the parents in her community seemed to possess. She cited her problems with the student who had refused to do any work for her, and her fear, after hearing rumours from other parents and staff members, that the mother was unhappy with Tammy. This had then caused Tammy to second guess the way in which she was dealing with her student. "I didn't think there would be times when I would be afraid of a parent or afraid to reprimand a child for fear of the [parental] consequences" (p. 75) Although the situation was eventually resolved, Tammy, too, had felt intimidated due to negative parental power.

All five teachers had experienced many more positive encounters with parents than negative ones, and all cited parent-teacher interviews as having been surprisingly pleasant. This unexpected enjoyment was shown in Brad's comments about his first parent-teacher evening.

> I thought I was going to sit in this desk and people were going to yell at me for three hours! And in fact, most of the parents were supportive and the comments were positive--"so-and-so really likes your English class" (p. 100).

Terry's comments also revealed her enjoyment of contact with parents. "I love the interviews, I can phone up parents, I can talk to them, no problem at all, and I was kind of worried about that" (p. 47).

One final observation involves the ineffectiveness of parental power when trying to achieve a positive result. It does seem rather ironic that when parents were attempting to act positively, as in the writing of numerous letters of support for teachers who were were losing their jobs, that their efforts were ignored by school and district officials.

**Impressions**

While some principals did seem to understand the importance of treating the people in their schools with dignity and respect, others seemed to lack this understanding. It appeared to this researcher as if a few principals felt that because they outranked another staff member, they then had the right to denigrate that person, a practice which indicated to this researcher, not only their lack of certain professional ethics but also their lack of simple good manners.

The principal, in the position of trusted school leader, has a responsibility to accurately and immediately inform all staff members regarding matters in which they are stakeholders, and this responsibility holds, whether the information is pleasant or unpleasant. Openness and honesty in all such dealings are essential qualities in a principal. As shown through Nancy's and Terry's experiences, if a principal procrastinates in delivering unpleasant news or avoids this responsibility altogether, the subsequent damage done to teachers will be difficult to repair. Not only does such practice destroy teacher morale, but it prevents teachers from planning for career alternatives because of their mistaken belief that they will continue to hold their teaching positions for another year. The teachers in this study were not asking for job guarantees or preferential treatment; they were simply expressing their right to be kept informed of the status of their contracts and the right to maintain dignity during this process. By witholding information, misinforming teachers, and, in a rather cavalier fashion, delivering news affecting these young teachers' careers, their principals denied them these rights, and in so doing, created unnecessary self-doubt in these teachers. Even though these teachers had received superior evaluations, it was still a blow to their self confidence to be informed that they were not needed by the school district, especially when all of them were aware of other first year teachers within the district who had received continuous teaching

contracts.

Although these principals were not legally obligated to keep their teachers informed, it does seem, to this researcher, that they were morally obligated to do so. Giles and Proudfoot (1990) assert that "[a]dministrators must behave in a way which fosters the trust relationship and conveys a message of caring for their teachers' socio-emotional needs" (p. 183) and they further advocate that "[o]ngoing, informal face-to-face communication is vital. (p. 184). Thus it follows that principals, especially when interacting with naïve and uninformed beginning teachers, should concern themselves with both care, "the unselfish concern for another's welfare . . . including opportunities for individual growth and development" (Young, Staszenski, McIntyre, & Joly, 1991, p. 2), and justice, "the concern for fair treatment based on the 'respect for a cluster of rights which affirms both the moral equality of all persons and the autonomy of each' (Callan, 1991, p. 1)" (Young, Staszenski, McIntyre, & Joly, 1991, p. 2). In the delivery of the news regarding the contract status of their beginning teachers, Sabine's and Tammy's principals appeared to have solved this problem from a caring perspective by keeping their teachers constantly informed, thereby including them in the process. In contrast, Nancy's and Terry's principals seemed to have approached this same problem from a justice perspective where they followed the rules by choosing between the alternatives of informing their teachers or not informing them as soon as this information became available. Thus it would seem that they had resorted to a legalistic definition of teachers' rights and principals' responsibilities to guide and rationalize their own behaviour in this process. Terry's principal, however, by misinforming her about the number of hours she was required to teach for contract eligibility, was neither caring nor just.

As school funding continues to be drastically reduced, principals will

continue to downsize their teaching staffs, and this downsizing process will undoubtedly involve eliminating the positions of their most junior staff members. Principals, like those of the beginning teachers in this study, will be required to deliver this unpleasant news to these staff members. Since the concept of downsizing is relatively new, many principals have not been prepared for, nor have they had experience with, the new situations in which they now find themselves. It is, understandably, difficult to let good people go, but if a principal witholds information, postpones the delivery of unpleasant news, or misinforms teachers, the situation, as shown through the cases of Nancy and Terry, is made considerably worse.

A similar practice of immediate, open and honest interaction should also be followed by the principal in all communication with the community. Nancy's principal, it appeared, was unable to be honest with the parents in her community and, as a result, caused many hard feelings because of her inability to confront unpleasant situations. This was shown when she left Nancy to fend for herself at the parent meeting in September where the parents were informed that there would be a split grade in the school, and again when she told parents that if their child had been in a split grade one year, then the child would not be in a split grade the following year, even though budget realities revealed this statement to be untrue.

**Recommendations**

- In terms of the selection and continuing evaluation of the performance of principals, decision makers involved in these processes should give equal credence to the way in which the candidate for the principalship has dealt with others, superordinates and especially subordinates, throughout his or her career.
- Workshops or inservices including a coaching component (or, at the very

least, a handbook) should be made available to assist existing principals in communicating honestly and sensitively with their school staffs and the community.

- Since downsizing is now a reality of public education, school jurisdictions and the local teachers' association should take an active part in the delivery of professional development and inservicing in terms of moral and legal responsibilities of principals in these new kinds of situations.

### University Preparation

It was interesting to note that for all five beginning teachers, there were only a few practicum experiences which these teachers viewed as having been negative ones in terms of their preparation for teaching. Each teacher had undergone three rounds of student teaching, (an observation round, a four-week placement, and an eight-week placement), and of these fifteen rounds only three rounds were identified as not having been particularly valuable to them. Terry mentioned that in her observation round she had been criticized because she had not taken enough initiative, and felt that this criticism was unfair because her understanding of her role in this particular phase was that she was to be an observer, and not a participant. Brad indicated that in his four-week round of student teaching he would have liked better modelling of classroom routines, particularly classroom management; and Nancy felt angry that, during her four-week placement, her cooperating teacher had abandoned her on the first day, leaving her to fend for herself.

All five beginning teachers spoke highly of their eight-week practicum phases, indicating that their success in these phases was due to the very positive influences of their cooperating teachers. They mentioned that all of their

cooperating teachers were extremely supportive, believed strongly in collaboration, gave freely of their time and teaching resources, and modelled for their student teachers the importance of establishing efficient and effective classroom routines. Between each student teacher and cooperating teacher, there had been a "foundation of trust and mutual regard necessary for the sharing of knowledge and reflective practice" (Muller, 1991, p. 14). Thus for all five of these beginning teachers, the cooperating teacher had functioned as a mentor.

Also of note was that Terry and Sabine, the two kindergarten teachers, had been surprised by their success in working with older students. Although both women, because of their experience in daycare, had been confident about working with kindergarten students, they had both been apprehensive about working with older children. Their confidence levels had been raised considerably when they discovered that they were able to successfully teach older students as well as younger ones. These women's experiences would seem to affirm that it is beneficial for student teachers in their practica to be exposed to students of various age levels and that sufficient exposure with adequate support allows student teachers to gauge how well they are able to cope with students of different ages.

In terms of their university preparation for teaching, all five beginning teachers expressed a need for more practical courses covering topics that would be immediately applicable to the classroom. All of them felt that they had left university with a sound theoretical background but that more pragmatic preparation in terms of the "administrative tasks" (Giles & Proudfoot, 1990, pp. 273-303) would have been useful in order to make a smoother transition from student teacher to professional teacher. This view is supported by the University of Alberta's Teacher Education Committee Report (1994) which indicates that

education graduates have "difficulty putting theory into practice" (p. 3). This was shown when Tammy mentioned that she had learned much about music theory but had gained little practical experience in the playing of certain musical instruments, and again in Sabine's comment that having specific knowledge regarding how to coordinate staggered entry into kindergarten and set up a parent committee would have been useful. Terry's comments about not knowing what she was expected to do on the first day of the school year, how to prepare for the month of September, or how to plan for a whole year also indicated this need for a more practical aspect to teacher preparation programs. It was further shown through Brad's surprise at the lack of control he had over his time outside the classroom due to staff meetings, conferences with colleagues, individual work with students, and the ever-present marking load. An additional perception of Brad's was that "there's nothing in common between university curriculum and high school curriculum" (p. 97).

## Impressions

The positive relationships that all five beginning teachers had formed with their cooperating teachers in their eight-week practica were supportive ones based on mutual regard and trust. Foster (1989) notes the importance of "unconditional support and a non-threatening atmosphere . . . if the student teacher [is] to develop skills that would encourage optimum student learning" (p. 110). The security that these five beginning teachers had felt in their relationships with their cooperating teachers had armed them with the necessary confidence to take risks in order to establish their own personal teaching styles.

In comparison, Nancy's negative experience in her four-week practicum when she was abandoned by her cooperating teacher on her first day dramatically underscores the need for the careful selection of cooperating

teachers. Brad's four-week experience with the cooperating teacher he perceived to be lacking in classroom management skills also emphasizes the importance of some sort of selection process for cooperating teachers. Foster (1989) indicates that such a process should include certain criteria for selection, the most important of which are "a high level of enthusiasm and a commitment to teaching and a demonstration of excellent teaching ability. Equally important are strong supervisory skills with respect to student teachers, particularly the ability to help the student teachers become self reflective practitioners" (pp. 132-133). To these criteria should also be added a willingness to give "emotional support in a mentoring relationship" (Muller, 1991, p. 2) so that success in the relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher "occurs when both [individuals] develop a greater sense of who they are and what it means to be a 'Teacher'" (p. 1) and both parties "[recognize that they] share in the joy and the responsibility of helping others become the best that they can be" (p. 1).

The preference of these five beginning teachers for a more practical basis to their preservice preparation would seem to support Miklos and Greene's (1987) findings. Participants indicated that, in terms of their university preparation for teaching, "[the expectation of] knowledge of subject matter . . . is fulfilled to a higher degree than is the expectation to learn about the practical aspects of teaching" (p. 202). This sentiment is echoed by one young man's comments, representative of many other participants, in Young and Bosetti's (work in progress) study as he observed that "university didn't train you for much" (p. 2). Similarly, the University of Alberta's Teacher Education Committee Report (1994) indicates that "[a]lthough they have strong content area knowledge, U of A graduates appear to have difficulty putting theory into practice [and] are lacking in classroom and behaviour management skills" (p. 3). MacKinnon (1989), however, cautions against "uncritical, passive socialization into the world of

teaching" (p. 16) and asserts that "the student teaching experience should be as much a part of university-based, university-controlled teacher education as taking a course in early childhood or educational adminstration" (p. 18). It appears that although there is recognition of the necessity for a more practical aspect to preservice training, if the practicum is "divorced from university work, then the notion of transferring current theory into practice becomes little more than empty words" (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 18). Thus it would seem that a balance between theory and practice must be maintained.

Brad's perception of the lack of similarity between his university English courses and the high school English courses he was teaching bears further discussion. Brad mentioned that his curriculum and instruction course was instructed by an individual who had difficulty making the transition from high school teacher to university instructor. This may have had some bearing on his perception of the lack of continuity between the university courses he had taken and the high school courses he was teaching. His experience does, however, seem to indicate that much depends on the instructor of such courses and it certainly validates the efforts of those instructors who offer their students preliminary school-based experiences which are meaningfully linked to their university course work. Such school-based experiences are one means of narrowing the gap between theory and practice, as articulated by Brad.

> There is an ivory tower mentality that once you get into real teaching doesn't work. I mean, there should be this ideal that we shoot for, but sometimes the instructors over there don't tell you that you are not going to hit it all the time. And how do you deal with it when in your classroom you can't meet this ideal, when the lessons don't pan out the way you think they should? (p. 95).

The efforts of those involved in both the University of Alberta's Partnership

Schools Practicum Project (LaRocque, 1991) and the University Collaboration Project in Language Arts (McClay, 1992), the reconceptualization of teacher education at the University of Lethbridge, (Greene,1994), and the various practicum models recommended in the University of Alberta's Teacher Education Report (1994) would seem to indicate that some effort is being made to provide university students with a more realistic combination of theory and practice.

Considering the myriad of demands placed on the beginning teachers in this study, it was surprising to this researcher that they coped with their individual classroom situations so successfully. As Veenman (1984) indicates, "[s]ometimes, beginning teachers are given more difficult classes, or less able classes, or they have to teach subjects in which they are not fully trained" (p. 147). Yet despite such difficult, trying, and, in one case everchanging, teaching assignments, (as shown when more than one-third of Tammy's class qualified for special needs funding, the necessity for Terry's numerous referrals to various social agencies for her kindergarten students, and the constant addition and deletion of high school English courses that Brad was teaching), their performance in the classroom, as detailed by their evaluations, was outstanding.

As funding for education continues to be reduced and as support becomes nonexistent for students with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, and behaviour disorders, teachers will be required to provide programs for these students within the context of the regular classroom. Large numbers of teachers, both beginning and experienced, do not have the skills to offer such programs. As Welch (1994) states, "the debate [on integration] will be rekindled when resources are diminished and class sizes increase dramatically throughout Alberta. . . . When integration . . . is best for the students we must ensure that our teachers and support staff are properly prepared to make this delivery model work" (p.3). He further states that "[t]here is an alarming increase in the number

of behavior disordered students with whom today's classroom teachers must cope" (p.3) and emphasizes that "[n]o graduate should leave a teacher education program without taking a course(s) in behavior and classroom management strategies" (p. 3). Further funding reductions will make these courses a necessity.

This view is supported in the University of Alberta's Teacher Education Commitee Report (1994) which outlines various principles with regard to changes in the current teacher education program. Two such principles deal with increased assistance in the preparation of student teachers to meet the needs of students who must now be integrated into the regular classroom.

> (h) the program should assist students to individualize assessment, program planning, and program delivery, to help meet the special needs of all students
> (i) classroom and behaviour management techniques, as well as a research-based understanding of the appropriate use of such techniques, must be included in all program models (p. 5).

However, it should also be noted that this responsibility does not belong to universities alone; it should extend to school jurisdictions, especially when they place teachers in situations for which these teachers have no experience or training. This point is clearly made in one teacher's submission to the Alberta Teachers' Association's Trying to Teach (1993) report.

> Up until now, it seems that we needed highly trained special needs teachers to assess these [special needs] students and develop individual programs specifically suited to each student's needs. These teachers needed special university training to learn how to do this. Once in the workplace, they also needed low numbers of students under their care due to the great time factor required to plan individual programs and the need to deliver these programs on a one-to-one basis. Now someone is trying

to tell us that every teacher can do this even if they have no training, no time, and all the other regular students to still plan and mark for as well (p. 6).

**Recommendations**

• Cooperating teachers should be selected carefully based on certain criteria like those proposed by Foster (1989, pp. 132-133), and further inservicing for cooperating teachers should take place before and during the actual practicum phase.

• Greater effort should be made to provide education students with school-based experiences which link practical experience to their university course work. Programs such as the University Collaboration Project in Language Arts in which undergraduate students, for course credit, work with junior high school students on their writing, as well as practicum experiences such as the Partnership Schools Practicum Project should become the rule rather than the exception.

• Courses in special education and classroom and behaviour management should become mandatory requirements for an undergraduate degree in education.

• Through inservicing and other professional development models, school jurisdictions should provide ongoing support for teachers requiring assistance with classroom behaviour management and special needs students.

## Support

The five beginning teachers in this study had made extensive use of the support services available to them. Professional support included after-school inservices provided by the district, consultants' visits to classrooms, formal and

informal conferences with principals, as well as informal talks and resource sharing with colleagues on staff, other teachers, and classmates from university. Important emotional support had been provided by the beginning teachers' families and friends.

Sabine's comments describing the support she had received from her principal and colleagues were representative of the experiences of all four of the elementary teachers.

> The teachers here have been great. If I'm doing something and they've got ideas, they're very willing to share. The principal, too, is always here if I've got a problem, or something. She's always got lots of ideas to share (p. 28).

In addition, caring support for Tammy was demonstrated by her principal when he took the time to walk down to Tammy's classroom, introduce himself to this researcher, and comment on the fine job Tammy was doing for the school. The experiences of Sabine and Tammy with principals who saw their schools as communities would seem to support Barth's (1991) notion of schools as "[c]ommunities of learners [which] seem to be committed above all to discovering conditions that elicit and support human learning and to providing these conditions" (p. 45).

Brad's experience with support differed greatly from the experiences of the four elementary teachers. Because he was teaching in a large high school, Brad had experienced minimal contact with his principal and three assistant principals, but had sought and found support from a few of his colleagues. "There are two other teachers in this department who are experienced teachers, but this is their first year in a high school as well, and it's nice to have them to talk to" (p. 102). He had been surprised, however, that there was not more widespread collegial

support.

> That, I think, would be the biggest thing. Just that I thought that there would be a little more collegiality and that I'd be monitored a little bit more, that I wouldn't feel quite so much like I'd been thrown in water and somebody had said "swim" (p. 107).

For Nancy, the advice and assistance given by the early childhood consultant from the district's central office had been useful. She noted that it had been valuable to be "working with the early childhood consultant, taking all [her] questions, having a chance to bounce some ideas around, to see what was working and what wasn't." Similarly, the support provided by the new teachers' consultant had been valuable to Tammy. "She [the consultant] has little support groups where we just get together for coffee sometimes, and other times she has showed us a film and talked to us about stress, and that kind of thing" (p. 80).

**Impressions**

The extensive use that Nancy, Terry, and Tammy had made of services offered by consultants would seem to indicate that such services are necessary, even in a time of severe budget cutbacks. As evidenced by the experiences of these teachers, there does appear to be a need for beginning teacher consultants who will provide timely and appropriate support for the ongoing professional development of new teachers. As indicated by Wells (1984), "progressive and liberal views students adopt during college shift [to more traditional ones] after their initial teaching experience " (p. 8). An inservice series with a coaching component would forestall this tendency of new teachers to revert to more traditional methods of instruction. Thus, even in this time of tremendous pressure to reduce central office services, support for new teachers

is crucial if new ideas and fresh talent are to be kept in the aging workforce of the teaching profession.

Brad's comments regarding his surprise at the lack of collegial support would seem to be typical of life in a large secondary school. According to Lieberman and Miller (1984), secondary schools are characterized by rigid hierarchical structures.

> As a bureaucracy, the school has a ladder of authority with the principal at the top rung, followed by the assistant principals, department heads, and, finally, by the teachers (p. 38).

The inflexible organization of the secondary school in which Brad was teaching had indeed made it difficult for collegial support structures to exist.

The comments of the participants in this study would seem to indicate that there is much support available to beginning teachers who are working in urban areas, and that this support has eased the transition from student teacher to professional teacher. Yet even though many beginning teachers gain positions in rural areas of the province, this type of orientation does not seem to exist for them, as indicated by Tammy's comment about her classmates who were employed by rural jurisdictions which did not provide support to their beginning teachers. The disadvantage of this lack of support is also shown in the comments of a participant in Young and Bosetti's (work in progress) study.

> At University there was the materials center, and if you work for a large school board you don't have to worry about this because they have resource centers and there are many other subject area teachers in the system. But there are a lot of people who don't work for these kinds of boards (p. 11).

This same study would seem to indicate that the provision of such orientation is

necessary, especially for beginning teachers in rural areas.

> Teachers in rural and independent schools frequently reported the absence rather than the presence of school, district, and subject-related orientation, a problem that was sometimes exacerbated by being the only subject-area specialist in the vicinity (p. 8).

Young and Bosetti's preliminary findings would seem to support Covert, Williams and Kennedy (1991) who, in their study of beginning teachers in Newfoundland, found that there were "difficulties associated with teaching in a rural area, that is, few resources and multigrade classrooms" (p. 12) and that "induction in rural areas may be much more difficult and complex than in more populated areas" (p. 3).

**Recommendations**

- Jurisdictions with consulting services for beginning teachers should retain these essential services.
- Jurisdictions without consulting services for beginning teachers should collaborate with the provincial teachers' association in the provision of such necessary services. As The Alberta Teachers' Association's Members' Handbook (1991) indicates, "[o]n request, the Association offers workshops on a variety of professional development topics to teacher groups" (p. 39), and these services are provided free of charge for members.
- The provincial teachers' association should serve as a central registery for matching novice teachers with experienced teachers so that advice, assistance and resources could be shared with colleagues new to the profession. This type of provincial support would have the additional benefit of promoting collaboration between school jurisdictions and the provincial teachers'

organization. With the computer technology available today, all teachers in the province could be linked in order to share resources and teaching ideas and strategies.

### Part Time Versus Full Time

Another issue which bears further investigation is that of part time teaching instead of full time teaching. Of the five teachers in the study, three were working in part time assignments. Although it is understood that numerous full time teachers devote far more than full time hours to the job, both Brad and Terry were putting proportionately far more than full time hours into their roughly three-quarter time teaching assignments. This was shown when Brad indicated in his comments about teaching high school English that he didn't think the workload "would be so all encompassing" (p. 98) and again when he mentioned that he "didn't expect to be putting in the 16-hour days that [he was] putting in" (p. 103). The number of hours that Terry had devoted to after school inservices in order to gain competence in the instruction of grade two mathematics combined with the numerous hours she had spent after school and on weekends with her young track team was testament to the amount of time Terry was devoting to her part time assignment.

By far the most dramatic example of the part time/full time issue was Sabine who, although offered two half-time kindergarten assignments in two different schools, had turned down the afternoon assignment, opting to do a good job in one assignment instead of what she felt would be a mediocre job in two assignments. She indicated that, because she was working half time, mornings only, she probably was devoting more hours to the job than she would have, had she been working in a full time assignment.

> I probably wouldn't stay until 9 or 10 at night, but you add on the afternoon, and I'm here until 2:30 or 3:00, or sometimes later. . . . You get home later and you don't feel like cooking a meal, so you sit and relax for a while. You're not eating until 6:30, 7:00 and you still want to relax a little bit. And before I know it, it's 8:00 and I have to touch up on my lesson plans (p. 26).

A bitter irony for Sabine was that because she had chosen only the one part time assignment, she was then ineligible for a continuous teaching contract with her school district because she had not taught the required number of hours. It does seem that someone should have communicated to Sabine some of the likely repercussions of her altruistic decision.

## Impressions

As school budgets continue to be reduced, and classroom support and resources shrink further, even greater demands will be placed on teachers. The comments of the five beginning teachers in this study combined with this researcher's twenty-one years of experience cause her to think that perhaps the job of teaching has become so demanding and time-consuming that it is now impossible to do well in a "normal" working day. The over 3 000 Alberta educators who responded to the call for submissions for the Trying to Teach (1993) document clearly indicate that this is indeed the case. "Teachers are feeling overwhelmed because of the combined effects of increasing demands and decreasing resources, both human and financial" (p. 24) and "[they] feel suffocated, frustrated, angry and stressed to the point of collapse" (p. 22). The follow up report, Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions (1994), written after the Alberta provincial government's massive funding cuts to education, reemphasizes the serious concerns that educators have about the state of education in the

province and warns that "[s]ubstantial cuts to funding can only make these situations worse" (p. 1).

As the many voices in Trying to Teach indicate, the number of unreasonable demands being made of today's teachers makes it impossible for many to do the job effectively. Although it is important for teachers to maintain high standards and it is natural for school jurisdictions to want to have the best teachers doing the best job, when demands are increased and resources and support are decreased, it then becomes impossible for teachers to maintain these high standards. The only way, then, for teachers to maintain such standards is to either decrease the number of hours (and, therefore, students) they are teaching by taking a part time assignment or increase the number of hours they are already devoting to the job, with resulting cost in terms of their private lives and professional capacities over a teaching year or even longer. Thus it does cause one to wonder how many experienced teachers currently teaching part time have made this choice so as to do the kind of job that they feel must be done for their students. It certainly seems possible that greater numbers of teachers may, like Sabine, choose part time teaching assignments in order to balance personal and professional obligations, a dilemma Young (1992) describes as a "competing urgency" (p. 148). This researcher is aware of four colleagues on her school staff who have made the choice to teach part time, specifically to achieve a balance between their professional and personal lives.

The difficulties experienced teachers are having in doing the job raise another interesting point for consideration. As evidenced by both the Trying to Teach ( 1993) and the Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions (1994) documents, the job of teaching has become difficult, demanding, and nearly impossible for practising teachers. Yet beginning teachers, despite difficult and trying teaching assignments, are expected to perform their duties at the same

level as experienced teachers. Chorney (1991), recalls his previous expectations as principal of the beginning teachers on his school staff.

> As principal, my expectations for the new staff members were that they would be well versed in the latest pedagogical methodology and management strategies, that they would be familiar with curricula, that they would be able to create lesson plans, unit plans, as well as yearly plans, and that they would be able to evaluate student work effectively. It was expected that the novice teacher would be able to effectively communicate students' academic and social progress to parents and be able to apply the principles of educational psychology not only to situations in their classrooms, but also to situations involving parents of students (p. 1).

His further comment would seem to reflect stakeholder expectations of beginning teachers. "In essence, the students, the parents and the teachers expected individuals who were new to the profession to be full participating members of the teaching profession on their very first day on the job" (p. 2). This, it would seem, is an unreasonable and unrealisitic expectation to place on teachers new to the profession, especially given the nature of some of their teaching assignments.

Sabine's experience with not having been informed and Terry's experience with having been misinformed about continuous contract eligibility cause one to think that perhaps in this particular school jurisdiction, the responsibility for delivery of this information is not clearly defined. Possibly if these two principals had been questioned directly by their beginning teachers about continuous contracts, they then would have felt obligated to accurately inform their teachers. Yet perhaps these new teachers did not know the right questions to ask, and it is possible that a busy administrator might not think immediately of specific contract implications for individual teachers.

**Recommendations**

• This study should be replicated using experienced teachers. There should be further investigation into the work world of experienced teachers in order to determine if the exorbitant number of hours being logged by beginning teachers is unique to their situations or a reality of the teaching profession. The Trying to Teach (1993) document would suggest that it is a reality of the teaching profession, but further formal documentation seems necessary.

• All teachers in the province should be surveyed in order to determine the number of teachers who are choosing part time over full time teaching in order to enjoy a more equitable balance of their professional and personal lives.

• Beginning teachers should not, in their first year, be expected to carry out the same curricular and extra-curricular responsibilites as experienced teachers who have a wealth of knowledge and practical experience on which to draw. Beginning teachers could spend the extra time preparing materials, marking, observing and conferencing with other teachers, and learning all other aspects of their chosen profession.

## No Job

Evident across all five teachers' stories was the sense of having experienced a very successful first year of teaching as defined by outstanding evaluations, the personal satisfaction of having done the best job they could in their teaching assignments, and the positive relationships they had formed with students, parents, and colleagues. They saw themselves as successful and they were told they were successful, so it was with bitter disappointment that they received the news that there would not be a continuous teaching contract for any of them the following year. This disappointment was accompanied by severe

disillusionment with the school district. Since all five teachers had received outstanding evaluations and none of them had been given any negative feedback regarding their teaching performance, the fact that they did not receive contracts was particularly disheartening. This was especially galling since, as Sabine noted, "[y]ou're led to believe that if you work hard and you do a good job, you're going to succeed" (p. 35). A bitter irony for these beginning teachers was that they had educated their students to believe that hard work would be rewarded, yet in their own experience, this was not the case.

Although the district had no obligation to these beginning teachers beyond the 1992-93 school year and these teachers were aware of this intellectually, emotionally it was still a shock for them to be told that they were no longer needed by the district, even though they had been evaluated as outstanding teachers. The positive relationships these teachers had formed with staff, students, and parents and the positive feedback they had received in terms of excellent evaluations and glowing letters of support to central office had made the loss of their jobs even more difficult to bear.

Sabine's comments indicated that, at the beginning of the school year, teachers new to the district had been made to feel important and special.

> And then attending all these functions for new teachers, and that. They say, "Oh, you're the best" and "You're wonderful!" and all the rest of it, and it's really good to hear that, but you kind of wonder do they say this every year and do they really mean it? (p. 33).

Thus it was particularly heartbreaking for all five beginning teachers to have put so much of themselves into such a successful first year of teaching, only to end the year feeling unappreciated by the school district that had hired them. Sabine's comment, indicative of the feelings of the group, illustrates the district's

hypocrisy.

> But I'm kind of annoyed that you don't get a letter, or anything official like "Gee, you've done a good job. We regret whatever--that we're unable to offer you anything." Just nothing from up higher. You're just a little number to them obviously. And I don't think that's very considerate (p. 34).

An additional perception of Sabine's was that beginning teachers are being misled by organizations such as the provincial teachers' association and the university.

> But I think perhaps the [provincial teachers' association] needs to get out there and be a little more realistic with the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of education students who are out there right now, and let them know that the reality isn't as rosy as you're led to believe. Because I think that that's a fact that at university they are [saying] "Oh, the projection is that in 92/93 there's going to be a teacher shortage" and I don't think that's fair (p. 34).

This comment would indicate the necessity for ongoing, honest dialogue with students about the realities of job opportunities for teachers in the nineties.

In the cases of Terry and Sabine, the reception of the news that there would be no job for them the following year was exacerbated by the fact that neither teacher had been informed that she had not taught the required number of hours for continuous contract eligibility. The unfortunate experiences of these two teachers certainly underscore the need for principals and those at point of hiring to be familiar with and honest about contract eligibility requirements.

**Impressions**

As indicated by principals' and colleagues' comments to this researcher, and as evidenced by outstanding performance reviews, these five beginning

teachers were both qualified and able to carry out all responsibilities of their teaching assignments. Yet a reality of the nineties is that school jurisdictions, due to financial constraints and other priorities, are not retaining such excellent personnel. These people, who have come to be known collectively as "Generation X" (Coupland, 1991), although well-qualified and able to do the job, are increasingly unable to secure and retain the professional positions for which they have been trained.

In these times of downsizing, when acquiring a teaching position most often does not mean keeping a teaching position, the school district, in the opinion of this researcher, has a moral obligation to explain to the new teacher the terms of the contract. From their courses in educational administration, it is possible that the beginning teachers in this study understood the distinct and different features of probationary, temporary, interim, part time, and continuing contracts, (*School Act*, pp. 54-58), but it is equally possible that they did not. For a beginning teacher experiencing the elation of a first teaching contract, these distinctions might be fairly abstract. Thus it is the responsibility of the school district to draw to the new teacher's attention verbally, with written follow-up, exactly how the contract applies to the individual teacher's situation. Once the teacher enters the school and forms emotional attachments with students, parents and colleagues, in addition to experiencing both the instrinsic rewards of working with young people and the positive reinforcement of a superior performance review, it is indeed difficult for the new teacher to imagine that she or he will not be needed the following year. Thus, because of these emotional considerations, both school jurisdictions and school principals have a moral responsibility to ensure that the beginning teacher is informed of and understands contract implications.

Young, Staszenski, McIntyre, and Joly (1994) advocate a combination of

care and justice in administration, a combination that seemed to be lacking in the district's treatment of the beginning teachers in this study. The way in which new teachers were honoured by the district at the beginning of the school year contrasts dramatically with this same district's silence at the end of the year when there was no official acknowledgement of the contribution made by these new teachers. This situation would seem to indicate that although the district gave the appearance of caring at the beginning of the year, it did not demonstrate caring at all because the "caring" at the beginning of the year did not include honesty or the recognition of the value of each teacher's contribution at the end of the year.

Sabine's comments about the lack of honesty on the part of the local teachers' association and the university about the job situation cause one to think that these could be errors of omission rather than of commission. It is possible that not enough is being said publicly about the reality of today's teaching job market. These organizations, then, have a responsibility to inform students early in their preservice training of the best projections of employment reality for education graduates, and the university has an additional responsibility to acquaint students with all employment options available to them. Students must be made aware that not all education graduates are going to gain positions in mainstream publicly funded educational institutions, and that other alternatives such as private schools and training positions in industry exist as possibilities for employment. This dialogue with students should begin upon entry into the preservice program and continue throughout their undergraduate years.

The experiences of Sabine and Terry regarding their ineligibility for consideration for continuous teaching contracts emphasize the need for principals to ensure that they have accurate and proper information before informing teachers about these and other issues. Lieberman (1988) in her discussion of building professional cultures in schools notes that "the pursuit of

egalitarianism and openness, with traditions of popular control, with principles of accountability and honest management" (p. 229) are important principles by which to operate. Sabine's and Terry's principals did not appear to abide by these principles when they were not honest with their beginning teachers about their ineligibility for continuous teaching contracts. In addition, the witholding of contract information by Nancy's principal caused this researcher to speculate that perhaps some principals are in possession of accurate information but are afraid to share this information with teachers in case these teachers, knowing that they will not be rehired, decide to stop working.

McGregor (1960) addresses this notion in his definition of management in terms of two assumptions about employee motivation. Whereas Theory Y holds that people work effectively when their input is valued, considered, and acted upon, Theory X holds that people are motivated only when they must be coerced to comply with regulations out of fear for their jobs (pp. 47-48). Terry's, Sabine's, and Nancy's experiences would seem to indicate that their principals espoused a Theory X orientation by using the power of their positions to avoid the issue of having to motivate staff members they knew would not be on their school staffs the following year. Yet, if this was the case, these principals' Theory-X assumption that coercion is necessary to performance was unfair because these same teachers, by worrying about the uncertainty of their situations, expended enormous amounts of energy which could otherwise have been directed to their classrooms. In addition, if this was indeed the case, it would seem to have been a rather patronizing assumption by these principals about the professionalism of their beginning teachers.

**Recommendations**

• Hiring practices of school jurisdictions should include more specific explanations to beginning teachers regarding the terms of their contracts. These explanations should occur at the district level and at the school level, both verbally and in writing.

• School jurisdictions should include as policy some means of expressing gratitude for the work of teachers they are unable to retain.

• Universities and provincial teachers' associations should conduct public, ongoing, and honest dialogue regarding the reality of today's job market for teachers. This topic should become mandatory course content for the required undergraduate course in Educational Administration.

• Greater effort should be made to phase new teachers into the profession. One possibility might be a modification of the University of Alberta's hastily conceived and implemented Initiation to Teaching Project (Jacknicke and Samiroden, 1991, pp. 99-118) which matched intern teachers with experienced teachers in order to integrate these new teachers into the profession. Another possibility might be through a mentorship program whereby a teaching asignment is split between a beginning teacher and a master teacher nearing retirement. A further possibility involving mentorship might be one in which mentors receive graduate course credit for participation in seminars (Hubert, 1992, pp. 11-13).

## Conclusion

The title of this study, *Freeze to the Tambourine: Stories from Five Beginning Teachers* came from a comment that Sabine made when she was discussing how she had learned to control her kindergarten students in the gymnasium. "Once you teach the signal 'freeze to the tambourine', you've got it

made" (p.25). It appeared to this researcher as if the school district, some principals and, in some cases, certain parents employed their power as a means of ensuring that these beginning teachers, anxious and eager to do a good job, remained passive and compliant about certain aspects of their professional situations. Thus "freeze to the tambourine" is an allusion to the power theme.

The practice of teaching should be viewed by all teachers at all stages of their involvement as career-long professional development. Becoming and being a teacher should be viewed as a continuum of professional development which begins upon entry to an education faculty. Initial requirements of preservice training should include school-based experiences in order to integrate theory and practice thereby making university course work more meaningful to the student. Practicum experiences should involve careful selection of cooperating teachers who are willing to be involved in seminar work throughout the practicum phase. Such involvement by cooperating teachers could be compensated by the awarding of course credit at the graduate level.

Following graduation and upon gaining the first teaching position, the beginning teacher should then move into a mentorship program with an identified master teacher, one who is willing to be involved in ongoing seminars and inservices for graduate course credit. As the novice teacher gains experience, she or he then could move along the continuum into the role of cooperating teacher for a number of years, and then, finally, into the role of mentor teacher to a first-year teacher.

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# Appendix A

## Interview Guide

Interview One

1. How do you feel as you approach your first year of teaching? Tell me about it.

2. Do you know your school or your teaching assignment for next year? Tell me about the school, your students, the community, your colleagues, and your administrators.

3. Tell me about your student teaching experiences.

4. Do you feel that your student teaching experiences have prepared you for your first year of teaching? In what way(s)?

5. What about the rest of your time in the faculty of education? Which courses do you feel have prepared you for teaching?

6. What do you feel are your strengths as a teacher?

7. What do you feel are your weaknesses?

8. What worries you as you approach your first year of teaching?

9. What do you feel confident about?

10. Describe for me what you anticipate a typical workday will be like next year.

11. How do you anticipate that teaching will fit into your life?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Interview Two

1. What did your teaching assignment end up being?

2. Tell me how it is going, so far.

3. Has the year been different from what you expected? If so, how? Have there been any surprises?

4. What is the best thing that has happened so far this year?

5 What is the worst thing that has happened?

6. What did you feel really well prepared for?

7. What did you feel not at all prepared for?

8. What type of a student were you at university?
What courses did you take? Major? Minor?

9. Besides your university course work, what other skills or abilities did you bring with you into teaching?

10. How are you managing to function within the context of this very large organization?

11. What types of support (both formal and informal) have you been able to

make use of?

12. Describe either the last week of your life, or a typical week in your life, including weekends. Include preparation, time management, choices you had to make.

13. Within the context of this week, what was the difference between how you expected the week would go, and how it actually unfolded? Or was there any difference at all?

14. To what extent were you able to plan and prepare for your week?

15. How did you cope with the unanticipated things that happened?

16. At this point, about one-third of the way through your first year, what would you say has been the biggest difference between your expectations and the actual reality of your first year of teaching?

17. Have you been evaluated yet? Has this caused you any anxiety?

18. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Interview Three

1. How has your year gone?

2. Have you had any great highs since the last time we talked?

3. Any tremendous lows?

4. What have you learned about teaching this year?

5. How is this different from what you expected?

6. What have you learned about yourself this year?

7. What are your plans for next year?

8. How did you find out that there would not be a job for you next year?

9. How do you feel about this?

10. What are your thoughts at this point about your professional future?

11. Do you have any other thoughts about the way you thought this year would go and the way it actually went?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Interview Four

1. How old were you during your first year of teaching?

2. Where did you grow up?

3. Tell me about growing up in your family.

4. Tell me about your elementary schooling. Are there any significant events which stand out?

5. Junior high?

6. High school?

7. University?

8. Who would you say were the most significant people in terms of the major decisions in your life?

9. How did you know that you wanted to be a teacher? How did you make this decision?

10. How would you describe yourself? Give three or four adjectives.

Appendix B

Correspondence

Linda Ewenson
11117-55 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5W 3P2

Date

Dear Participant:

Thank you for indicating your willingness to participate in my research project, *Exploring the Contrast Between Expectations and Realities During the First Year of Teaching*. The purpose of my study is to explore the differences between new teachers' expectations of the first year of teaching and the realities they experience.

The results of this study will, I believe, be of interest to educators concerned with both preservice and inservice teacher education. I also hope that these results will indicate future directions for the development and continued revision of teacher education programs in order to retain quality teachers in our profession.

The chief method of data collection will be through a series of three tape-recorded interviews conducted before, during, and after the 1992-93 school year. I anticipate that no more than an hour will be required for our first session, which will focus on your expectations of your first year of teaching. Once the interview has been transcribed, I will share the transcript with you so that you can make, as necessary, any additions, corrections, or deletions.

For the final thesis document, your permission will be sought to use direct quotations. Neither you nor your school or school district will be identified in it and care will be taken to ensure that no specific comments are attributable to you or your school.

I would like to remind you that your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and that you have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time. If you would like further clarification of any aspect of this research study or your interview, please contact me at 471-1847. Additional information regarding my work may be obtained by contacting my faculty advisor, Dr. Beth Young, at 492-7617.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Ewenson

Once you have read the accompanying letter, please complete the consent form below to indicate that you agree to participate in this study. Please bring the signed consent form with you to our first meeting.

**********

I, participant, have read the accompanying information and do hereby agree to participate in the research study, *Exploring the Contrast Between Expectations and Realities During the First Year of Teaching.* I realize that my participation is completely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

_____

(signature)

_____

(date)